

# **GHANSHYAM CHARITRA**

Stories from Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Childhood



A Textbook of the Satsang Examinations Series: 2

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**Gujarati Text:** Prof. Ramesh M. Dave

**Translation:** BAPS Sadhus



Swaminarayan Aksharpith  
Ahmedabad

## **Ghanshyam Charitra**

Stories from Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Childhood

A textbook for the Satsang Examinations under the curriculum set by  
Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha

**Inspirer:** HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

**Blessing:** HH Mahant Swami Maharaj

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# Blessings

The youth movement established and nourished by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj has been expanding at a very rapid pace. To satisfy the aspirations and thirst for knowledge of the youth joining the movement, and also to enable them to understand and imbibe the principles of Akshar-Purushottam expounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the publication division of Shri Akshar-Purushottam (Swaminarayan) Yuvak Mandal, organized under the auspices of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar-Purushottam Sanstha, has drawn up a plan to bring out a series of books.

These books are intended to systematically impart scholarly knowledge in a simple language to the children and youth of the Satsang. It is hoped that this Sanstha – established by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj to implement and propagate the ideals revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan – will, through this activity, teach the ideals and noble traditions of the Sampradaya and through it, the Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

The aim of this Sanstha is to spread the divine message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan to all corners of the world. It is planned to bring out these books in different languages. We hope that all religious-minded truth seekers of the Sampradaya and those outside it, will welcome this activity and extend their full support to it by all possible means, including monetary help.

To encourage children and youths, examinations are held based on the curriculum as presented in these books. Certificates are also awarded to successful candidates.

I bless Shri Ishwarcharan Swami, Prof. Rameshbhai Dave, Kishorebhai Dave, and all others who have assisted in the preparation of these books.

Vasant Panchami  
Vikram Samvat 2028  
(21 January 1972 CE), Atladara

Shastri Narayanswarupdasji  
(Pramukh Swami Maharaj)  
Jay Swaminarayan

## Publisher's Note

This publication, *Ghanshyam Charitra*, gives a brief introduction to the divine childhood of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Known as Ghanshyam, he was loved and revered by all. Right from birth his divinity was experienced by family, friends and strangers.

His childhood teaches us the virtues that should be developed from a young age. Ghanshyam's devotion to God, sincerity in studies, service to others, regularity, compassion and other noble qualities convinced everyone that he was the manifest form of God.

This interesting and inspiring collection of Ghanshyam's childhood stories will motivate all to develop such values in life.

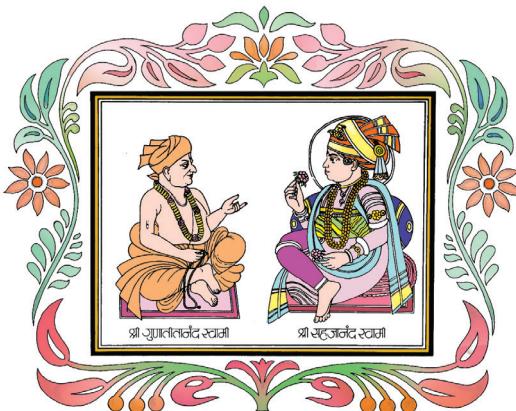
The publication, *Ghanshyam Charitra: Stories from Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Childhood*, is an English translation of the Gujarati text *Ghanshyam Charitra*.

This book has been designed to serve as part of the curriculum for the Satsang Prarambha Examinations. We thank the BAPS sadhus who have diligently produced this latest edition.

It is our earnest prayer that all devotees will study these books carefully, pass the examination with flying colours and, above all, earn the blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

- Swaminarayan Aksharpith

# Prayer



Ame sau Swāminā bālak, marishu Swāmine māte;  
Ame sau Shrijitanā yuvak, ladishu Shrijine māte...  
Nathi dartā nathi kartā, amārā jānani parvā;  
Amāre dar nathi koino, ame janmyā chhie marvā...Ame 1  
Ame ā yagna ārambhyo, balidāno ame daishu;  
Amārā Akshar-Purushottam, Gunātit gnānane gāishu...Ame 2  
Ame sau Shrijitanā putro, Akshare vās amāro chhe;  
Svadharmi bhasma choli to, amāre kshobh shāno chhe...Ame 3  
Juo sau Motinā Swāmi, na rākhi kāi te khāmī;  
Pragat Purushottam pāmi, malyā Gunātit Swāmi...Ame 4

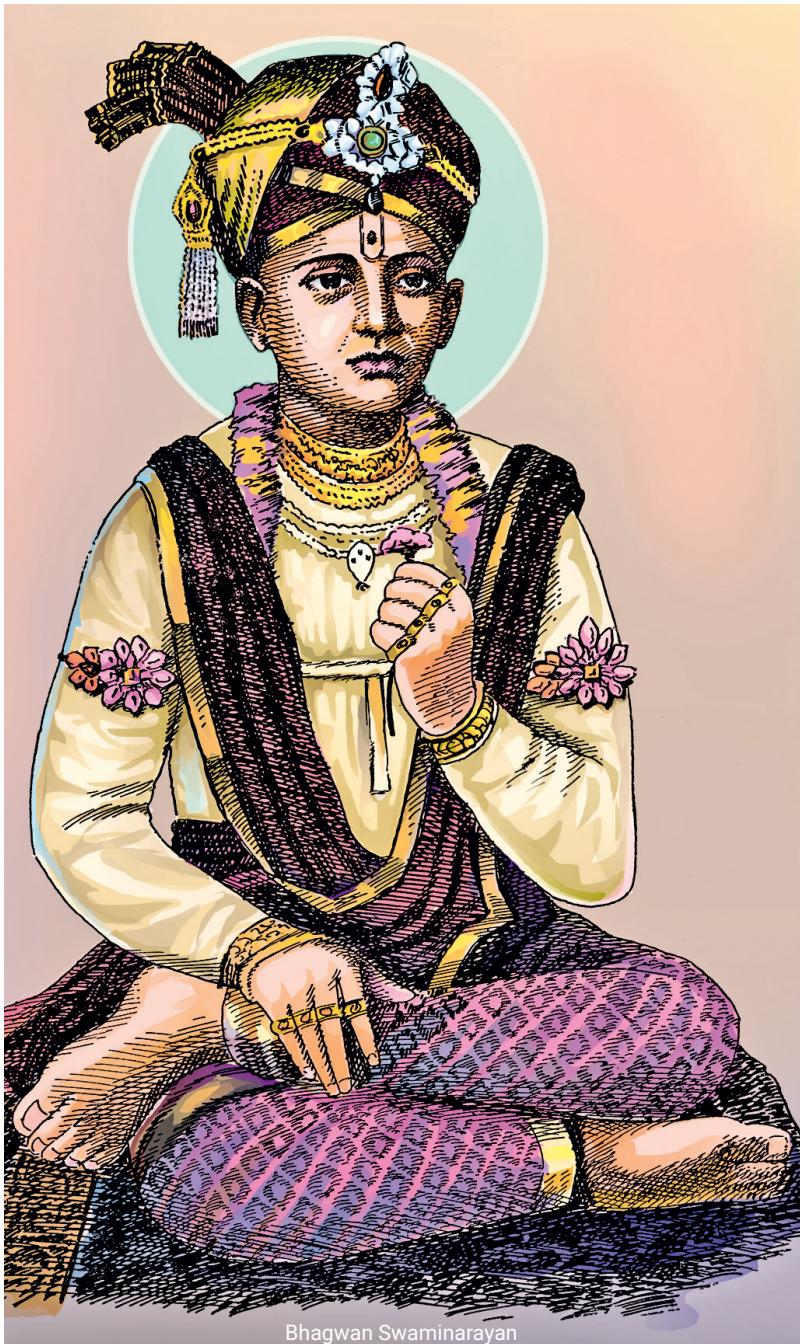
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**Meaning:** We are all children of Swami; we will die for Swami. We are all youths of Shriji [Maharaj]; we will fight for Shriji [Maharaj].

We are not afraid; we do not worry about our own lives. We do not fear anyone; for we are born to die.

We have begun this sacred endeavour (*yagna*), and we will offer any sacrifice. We will sing the glory of Akshar-Purushottam and the knowledge of Gunatit. We are all the children of Shriji [Maharaj]; Akshar is our abode. We are dedicated to our dharma; we have no sorrows whatsoever.

Everyone see Motibhai's Swami [Shastriji Maharaj]; he has left no shortcomings. We have attained the manifest (*pragat*) Purushottam and Gunatit[anand] Swami.



Bhagwan Swaminarayan

# 1. Birth of Ghanshyam

Chhapaiya is a beautiful small village near Ayodhya, in Uttar Pradesh. All around it are lots of banyan, pipal, mango, tamarind, guava and pomegranate trees. One finds a forest of *jambu* trees on its outskirts. There is a constant chirping of birds. The sweet notes of cuckoos, *mena*, *devchaklis*, parrots and peacocks fill the air and enliven the atmosphere. The whole village appears enchanting with its tiny streets, and charming mandirs and houses.

It is the night of 3 April 1781 (Chaitra sud 9, Samvat year 1837). The time is 10 o'clock at night and there is rejoicing in and around the house of Dharmadev. Outside the house, children are dancing with joy. Women are joyfully flocking to Dharmadev's house, singing and carrying large silver plates filled with *kumkum*, *gulal*, garlands of flowers and silken clothes in their hands. People are gathering all around the house. Outside, the Brahmins are reciting sacred mantras in the *yagna* arena. Dharmadev is donating ornaments, clothes and cows to Brahmins, sages and the poor. Rows of lighted lamps, arranged



Celebration of Ghanshyam's birth

one above the other, give the whole house an enchanting glow. Drums and pipes are playing soulful tunes.

But why are all these festivities taking place here tonight? Because a son has been born to Dharmadev and Bhaktimata. And it is Parabrahma Purushottam Narayan, supreme God himself, who has been born to Bhaktimata. God himself has manifested in the form of this newborn baby. His shining form fills the whole



The devas shower flowers and come for darshan

house with divine light and joy. Everyone is astonished to see such radiance. The devas shower flowers and *chandan* from the sky. Seated in their heavenly chariots, they have come to have darshan of Dharmadev's son. Trumpets of victory are sounded all around.

## 2. Childhood Lila

There was an evil man named Kalidatta. He was foremost among sinners. He became very upset and agitated when he learnt that God had taken birth as a baby boy at Dharmadev's house.

One early morning, he ordered all his evil women accomplices, "Go to Dharmadev's house and kill the child." The evil women came to Chhapaiya, and started looking for Dharmadev's house. The demonesses were all extremely dark in colour, with blood-red eyes, big pointed teeth, ugly faces and frightful voices. When they found Dharmadev's house, they peeped in quietly, and saw Bhaktimata feeding milk to the child. They slowly stepped in and, before Bhaktimata realized what was happening, quickly lifted the child from her lap and tore away towards the mango grove.

Hanumanji, son of the wind-god, resided in the mango grove. Seeing evil women carrying the child-God away, he at once got up, took a few long jumps and soon caught up with them. He took the child from the hands of the old, evil woman who was carrying him and then caught hold of all the other demonesses, tied their ponytails to his own tail, and lashed it violently against the ground. He then pulled some of them by the hair and gave them a sound thrashing. Others, he lifted high, whirled them round and round, and finally threw them to the ground. They cried with pain, and with tears in their eyes, they asked for forgiveness, "Please let us go. We will never again come to Chhapaiya." Hearing their sincere pleas, Hanumanji let them go, and they quickly scampered off into the distance.



Hanumanji returns Ghanshyam to Bhaktimata

Hanumanji then quickly returned to the village, and gave the child to Bhaktimata and left. Bhaktimata, who was stricken with grief, was now greatly relieved. She took the child in her lap, pressed him to her bosom, and cuddled him with affection.

The evil accomplices returned to Kalidatta and gave a report of what happened. They then declared with one voice, "We shall never again go to Chhapaiya to face the child. Hanumanji nearly beat us to death!" On hearing this, Kalidatta became furious. He sent his most senior demoness, Kotra, with instructions to kill the child-God.

Kotra soon came and stood before Dharmadev's house. She waited for the child to be left alone. But Bhagwan is all knowing. He looked at Kotra from the corner of his eyes and she started burning instantly. "I am burning, I am dying," she screamed. Thus shrieking and struggling to douse the flames, she died on the spot. Though Kotra was powerful as a giant, she was destroyed within a short time. The children of the village were afraid on seeing Kotra's dead body. Everyone was speechless with fright. They all wondered as to how such an



Bhagwan's glance burns Kotra

evil woman could have come so close to killing Dharmadev's child. Dharmadev and Bhaktimata were also alarmed and took the child inside to rest.

### 3. Darshan to Ramdayal

Days passed by and the infant's actions were becoming more and more astonishing. He was now two-and-a-half months old.

One day, as Bhaktimata had some work to do, she quickly placed her son in the cradle, and went to the kitchen. Soon after she was gone, the child sat up in the cradle. He saw his *chusni* lying some distance away on the floor. He climbed down from the cradle, crawled on his knees, picked it up and returned to the cradle.



Ramdayal sees Bhagwan crawl out of his cradle

Dharmadev's friend, Ramdayal, who was sitting nearby, saw all this. He asked Dharmadev, "How old is your son?" "He is two-and-a-half months old," Dharmadev replied.

Hearing this Ramdayal thought, "For sure, the boy must be God himself. Otherwise, how could he have such awareness at such a young age." Thinking thus, he went to the cradle, and looked at him. Rays of brilliant light started coming out of the child's body, and the whole room was filled with brilliance. Ramdayal was astounded. Then and there he became convinced that the child was the very manifestation of God himself.

## 4. Naming the Child

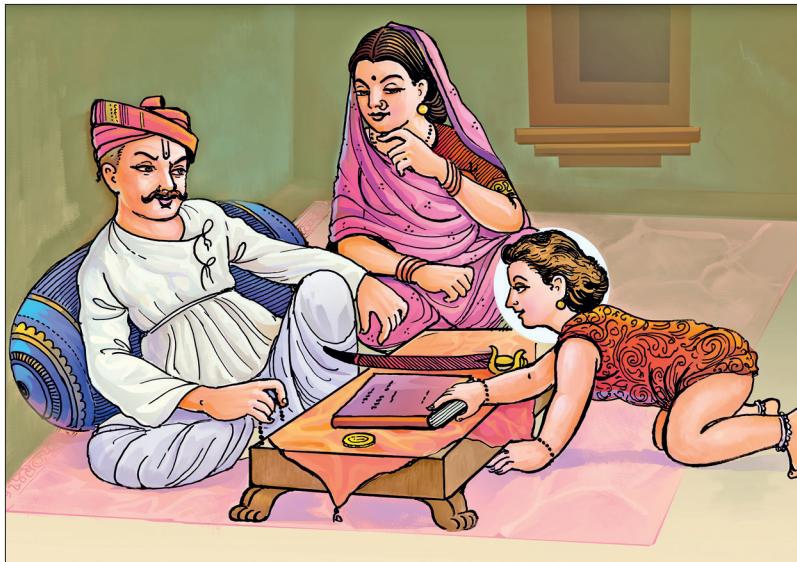
When Lord was three months old, Sage Markandeya came to Dharmadev's house. Dharmadev received him warmly, and honoured him. Then, Dharmadev said, "You are a renowned and learned astrologer. Please give my son a name and foretell his future."



Sage Markandeya names the child

Sage Markandeya opened his astrology book, and began to count on his fingers. After some time, he smiled and said, "Your son is born under the sign of Cancer, so his name will be Hari. Since he has a dark complexion, he will also be known by the name of Krishna. A combination of the two makes it Harikrishna. People will also call him Ghanshyam. Your son possesses all the virtues of austerity, detachment, yoga, dharma, integrity, truthfulness and discretion, so he will also be known as Nilkanth. Your son will restore dharma on Earth. He will relieve the miseries of countless people, and thus his fame will spread everywhere. He will grace people with samadhi, and liberate them. He will inspire them to worship God and grant happiness to all."

Dharmadev was overjoyed to hear all this. He gave new clothes, ornaments, cows and gold coins to the sage as *dakshina* before bidding him farewell.



Ghanshyam picks up the book

## 5. A Test for the Son

Once, Dharmadev decided to test his son, Ghanshyam. He asked for a small stool from Bhaktimata and then covered it with a silk cloth. He placed a gold coin, a book and a small sword on it. Then, he and Bhaktimata sat near the stool. They waited with great interest to see which of the three items Ghanshyam would pick up.

Within a short time, Ghanshyam got down from his cradle, went to the stool and picked up the book. Seeing this, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata were convinced that their son would excel in his studies and become a scholar.

## 6. Ghanshyam Has His Ears Pierced

When Ghanshyam was seven months old, Bhaktimata decided to have his ears pierced. The following day, she took Ghanshyam



Ghanshyam appears in two forms

out and sat on a platform by the foot of a tamarind tree just opposite their house. The man whose job it was to pierce Ghanshyam's earlobes came along. He approached Ghanshyam with a needle and tried gently to hold his ear. However, as soon as he gripped the ear, a dazzling light radiated from Ghanshyam which blinded the man's eyes. Wherever he turned his eyes, he saw only the divine light. He was so frightened that he simply screamed.

Just then, Ghanshyam withdrew the light back into his body and disappeared from his mother's lap. His mother looked around anxiously for him. She saw him sitting on a branch of the tamarind tree. At once, she called for her elder son, Rampratapbhai, and asked him, "See, Ghanshyam is seated on the tamarind tree. Climb up and bring him down."

However, when Rampratapbhai climbed the tree, he was surprised to find that Ghanshyam had already disappeared and was sitting beside his mother on the ground below. So he climbed down. When he went back to his mother, Ghanshyam was still sitting beside her. Then when he looked up, he saw Ghanshyam

sitting up on the tree as well. Thus, for a long time, Ghanshyam was visible to Rampratapbhai in two separate places at the same time. The man who had come to pierce Ghanshyam's ears was frightened on seeing these two forms of Ghanshyam.

Ghanshyam then made his form on the tree disappear, and said, "Mother, I shall have my ears pierced only if you give me some *gur* (jaggery) to eat."

On hearing this, Bhaktimata said, "You will certainly get some *gur* provided you behave properly and sit still to have your ears pierced." So saying, she sent for some *gur* from inside the house, and gave it to Ghanshyam. Thereupon, Ghanshyam sat on his mother's lap quietly and, while eating *gur*, allowed his ears to be pierced.

## 7. Siddhis at His Service

Ghanshyam had a maternal aunt named Lakshmibai. One morning she asked Bhaktimata. "What shall I cook today?" Bhaktimata replied, "There is no hurry. When you find time you may cook *shiro*." Lakshmibai went to the kitchen and leisurely began to prepare food. Hours passed and the meal was still not ready. Bhaktimata was very hungry. When Ghanshyam came to know that his mother was hungry, he instructed eight *siddhis* to bring food at once. In no time, all eight *siddhis* descended from the sky. They were extremely beautiful, like the *apsaras* of Heaven. They had put on fine, colourful dresses, and each one of them carried a plate in her hands. The plates were full of 32 delicious delicacies.

Bhaktimata was surprised to see these beautiful women in her house. The *siddhis* said, "Mother, we are *siddhis*. As you were feeling hungry, Ghanshyam instructed us to bring food for you. We have brought many delicious dishes on these plates. Please accept some."



The eight *siddhis* serve delicious delicacies to Ghanshyam and Bhaktimata

Despite the request from the *siddhis*, Bhaktimata hesitated. When Ghanshyam saw this, he came down from his cot, ate a little from each plate himself, and then said to his mother, "You also eat." So, Bhaktimata also ate. As soon as she had finished, Lakshmibai came from the kitchen with hot *shiro*. She was greatly surprised to see the eight *siddhis* there, with plates full of many varieties of food.

The *siddhis* offered to bring food every day, "Mother, we shall bring delicacies for you every day." However, Ghanshyam told them, "Do not bring food every day, but only when aunty is unable to cook the day's meal in time." Each one of the *siddhis* then bowed at Ghanshyam's feet and disappeared into the sky.

## 8. Dudhpak Instead of Khichadi

One afternoon Ghanshyam felt hungry and asked Bhaktimata for some food to eat. She promptly gave him some cold *khichadi*. “Start eating this slowly, dear, while I bring some milk,” she said, and went to the cowpen.

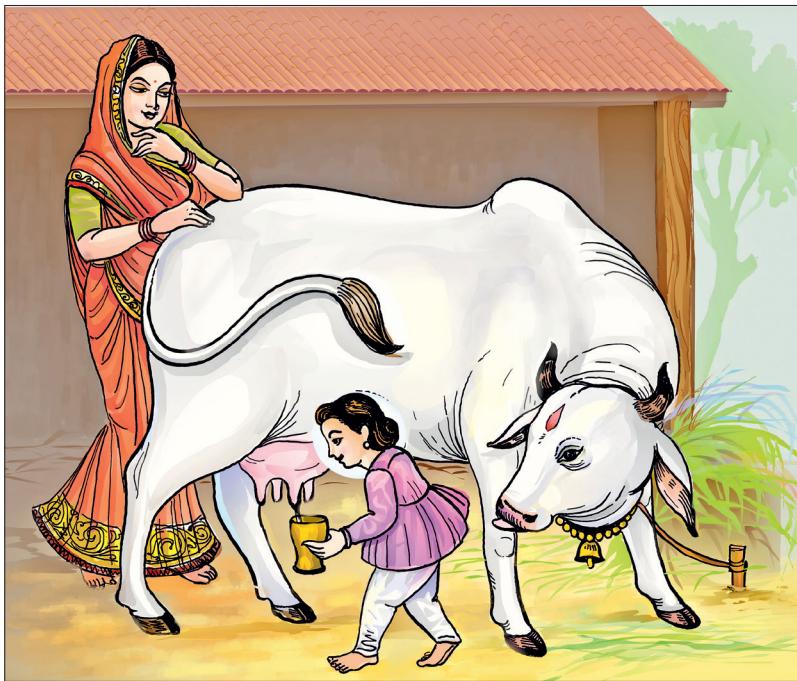
There was a cow named Gomti in the pen. She was milked twice a day – in the morning and evening. Bhaktimata tried to milk her, but no milk flowed from her udders. In the meantime, Ghanshyam came to the cow-pen with a glass in his hands. Seeing him Bhaktimata told him, “The milk will take some time, so go back and wait patiently.”

However, Gomti was very fond of Ghanshyam. If Ghanshyam wanted to drink milk, she would give it at any time. Therefore, when Ghanshyam held the glass under the cow’s udders, a stream of milk started flowing, and the glass became full in no time. Seeing this Bhaktimata was amazed. She rushed inside and brought a metal pot. When she held it in place, it too became full, but still the milk did not stop flowing. Again, Bhaktimata went in and brought a bigger pot. That too was filled up in no time. Bhaktimata now started worrying that if the flow did not stop, all the vessels in the house would be filled only with milk.

However, Ghanshyam put her fears at ease, “Mother, don’t worry. Now you will not have to fetch any more vessels. This milk flowed only because of my wish. Now it will stop flowing.”

Still, Bhaktimata thought, “What if the flow of milk does not stop?” So, she again went to the kitchen to fetch a pot. When she returned with the pot, the milk had stopped flowing.

Bhaktimata was astounded to witness such a miracle. Naturally, she felt proud of her son. She thought, “Since there is so much milk, let me prepare some *dudhpak*.” She



Gomti gives milk to Ghanshyam

told Ghanshyam, “Now you need not eat cold *khichadi*. I shall quickly prepare *dudhpak* and *puri*.” Within a short time Bhaktimata cooked a meal of *dudhpak* and *puri* and lovingly fed Ghanshyam.

## 9. The Barber Sees a Miracle

Ghanshyam was now in his third year. Dharmadev decided that it was time to shave Ghanshyam’s head. So, at an auspicious time the following morning, he sent for Amai, the barber. The latter soon turned up with his shaving kit.

Bhaktimata sat Ghanshyam on her lap and sat down facing east. Amai took out his razor and began to shave Ghanshyam’s head. When the shaving was half finished, Ghanshyam became invisible to the barber. While everyone else could see



Ghanshyam has his head shaved

Ghanshyam sitting on his mother's lap, Amai alone could not see him. So he got alarmed and stopped shaving. Seeing this, Bhaktimata told him, "What are you waiting for? Come on, finish the shaving."

Amai replied nervously, "What can I do, Mataji? How can I shave Ghanshyam when I cannot see him?" Hearing this, Bhaktimata whispered to Ghanshyam, "A half-shaven head does not look good. Let him finish the shaving. Reappear to Amai."

Thereupon, Ghanshyam looked at Amai and became visible to him. Amai then went on to complete the shave. He was now convinced that the child was God himself, and so he prostrated before him and received his blessings before departing.

Ghanshyam then bathed in the Narayan Sarovar. Dharmadev made donations to the Brahmins and distributed *patasa* to all, before engaging himself in the dinner arrangements for the Brahmins.

## 10. Kalidatta Meets His End

As Dharmadev and Bhaktimata were busy with their work, they lost sight of Ghanshyam. Meanwhile, Ghanshyam's friends came running to him so that they could play together.

They all went to the mango garden, east of Narayan Sarovar, laughing and jumping, and began to play *ambli-pipli*. As they were playing, the evil Kalidatta arrived there. He decided that he would carry away all the children, and kill Ghanshyam.

And so he stretched out his hand to catch hold of Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam looked at Kalidatta, who began to burn. This made him angry and so, with his magical powers, Kalidatta created a severe cyclone which brought torrential rains. Everything was plunged into darkness. The children began to shiver because of the cold. Kalidatta made loud shrieks to frighten the children. All the children hid themselves in the hollow of a big banyan tree.

Ghanshyam, however, went and sat under a mango tree that was a short distance away. Kalidatta was shouting and searching for Ghanshyam. First he saw Ghanshyam sitting under the mango tree. Then, to his surprise, he saw him sitting on the tree. So he enlarged his body high up into the sky, and wilfully fell on the tree with tremendous force. Many branches fell with a crash. Kalidatta laughed in triumph, thinking that Ghanshyam had been completely crushed under the tree. He then started removing the fallen branches one by one in the hope of finding Ghanshyam's shattered body. Ghanshyam, however, was sitting unscathed, with the fallen branches as his protection.

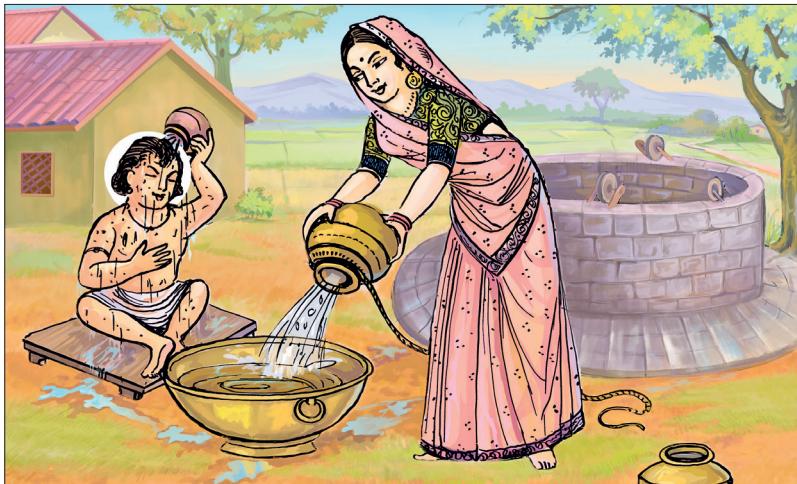
Kalidatta was mystified and also terribly angry at this sight. He stretched out his arms to catch Ghanshyam.

Seeing this, Ghanshyam shot one burning glance at Kalidatta. Almost immediately, Kalidatta found his body lifted by an unknown force and hurled against the tree repeatedly, until he fell dead.



Kalidatta tries to destroy Ghanshyam

Then, with his divine powers, Ghanshyam stopped the cyclone and rain. The weather became bright and clear again. Ghanshyam's friends came out of the hollow of the banyan tree, and searched for Ghanshyam.



Ghanshyam bathes in cold water and is cured of smallpox

Meanwhile, Bhaktimata remembered Ghanshyam. Along with Dharmadev, she began to look for him anxiously, and at last came to the mango tree. There they found him. Bhaktimata lifted her son and fondly cuddled him. Finding Ghanshyam back in their midst, the children also rejoiced. Laughing and jumping as before, they all returned home.

## 11. Curing Smallpox

Once, in summer, the heat was excessive. As Ghanshyam was down with fever, he was not taking any food. When news of this reached Aunt Chandanmasi, she came to enquire about him. When she saw Ghanshyam, she realized that he had smallpox. She advised her sister, Bhaktimata, "Ghanshyam has smallpox. Put him to bed in one of the more secluded rooms."

Bhaktimata at once put Ghanshyam to sleep and began to pray. Then her sister-in-law, Lakshmibai, came to see Ghanshyam. Realizing that Ghanshyam had a high fever and smallpox, she said, "It will be advisable not to allow him to go out, or to wash, or even to touch water for 20 days."

When Ghanshyam heard this, he said, “How can I go without my usual bath? We are Brahmins. We must bathe every day. Please bring some cold water. I’ll take a cold water bath. Both the smallpox and the fever will disappear.”

Bhaktimata believed his words. She took him to the well, and drew cold water for him. After pouring a few buckets of cold water on him, she felt his body and found that the smallpox had subsided and the fever too had gone down. Only a few dim spots were left on the body. Seeing the miraculous recovery, both Chandanmasi and Lakshmibai thought that Ghanshyam must surely be God himself. They bowed to him, smiled and returned home.

## 12. Fish Brought Back to Life

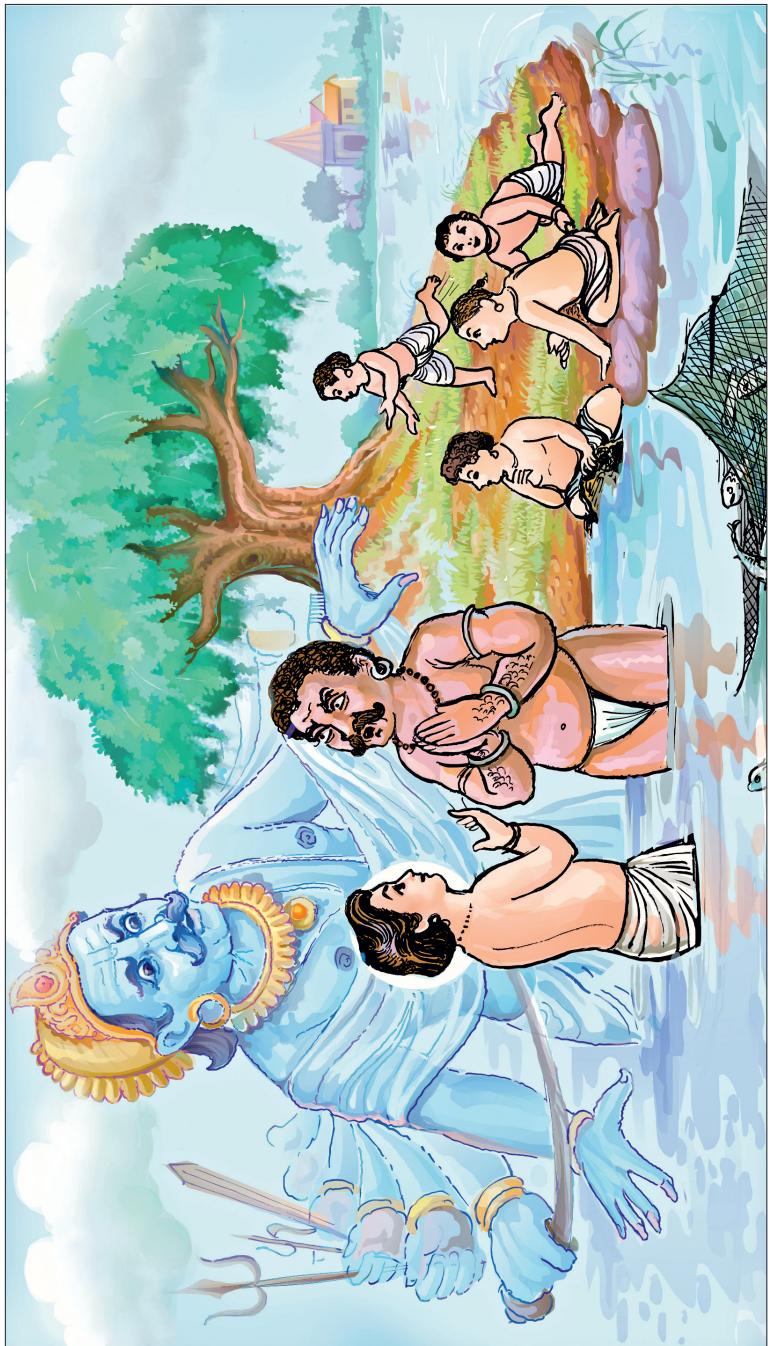
One day in Chhapaiya, Ghanshyam proposed to his friends, Veni, Madhav and Prag, “Let us go to Lake Meen to bathe.” His friends were delighted. The four of them went to Lake Meen. A banyan tree stood on the banks of the lake. The boys changed their clothes under the shade of the tree.

Meanwhile, Ghanshyam’s eyes fell on a lone fisherman.

He was a dark, tall, well-built man. He was catching fish and putting them in a basket. Ghanshyam saw a pile of fish in the basket. His heart bled at the sight of so many dead fish. He willed that the fish became alive again. As soon as he had this thought all the fish came to life and leapt back into the water.

The fisherman became very angry. He rushed towards Ghanshyam to beat him up. Ghanshyam thought that the arrogance of a proud man must be dissolved; one who kills living beings must be punished. So he took the form of Yam Raja, the god of death, and walked up to the fisherman.

Yam Raja’s appearance was frightening and awesome. He had a big moustache, sharp protruding teeth, blood-red eyes



The fisherman realizes his mistake and seeks Ghanshyam's blessings

and a long tongue that hung out of his mouth. He had 18 hands, each armed with different weapons: sword, spear, trident and others.

The fisherman became terrified at the sight of Yam Raja. His hands and legs began to tremble. Perspiration ran down his face and body. Yam Raja showed him a vision of Hell and the punishments that await the wicked and the sinful in Yampuri – Hell. Then he got him soundly thrashed by his attendants. The fisherman's bones ached and he screamed in pain, "Please save me. Please let me go!"

The fisherman realized his mistake. He asked for forgiveness and prayed to Ghanshyam, "My bones are all aching. I am frightened and shiver all over when I think of Yampuri and the terrors of Hell. I have made a mistake. Please forgive me. I shall henceforth never kill fish. You are God manifest. Please set me free from my past sins." With these words, he prostrated before Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam blessed him, and let him go.

Ghanshyam and his friends then bathed in the lake before returning home.

## 13. Sparrows Sent into Samadhi

Near Chhapaiya is the village of Targaam. On its outskirts was a field belonging to Dharmadev. One day, Dharmadev requested, "Ghanshyam, the rice in our field is now ripe. But the sparrows are spoiling the crop. Besides, today we are going to a neighbouring village for some urgent work. So, you go and look after the field." Ghanshyam readily agreed. Bhaktimata served him food, put a cap on his head and gave him a pair of velvet slippers to wear. She also gave him a long stick before sending him out to guard the field.

Playing with his stick, Ghanshyam soon reached the field. He climbed a *jambu* tree and saw hundreds of sparrows in the field.



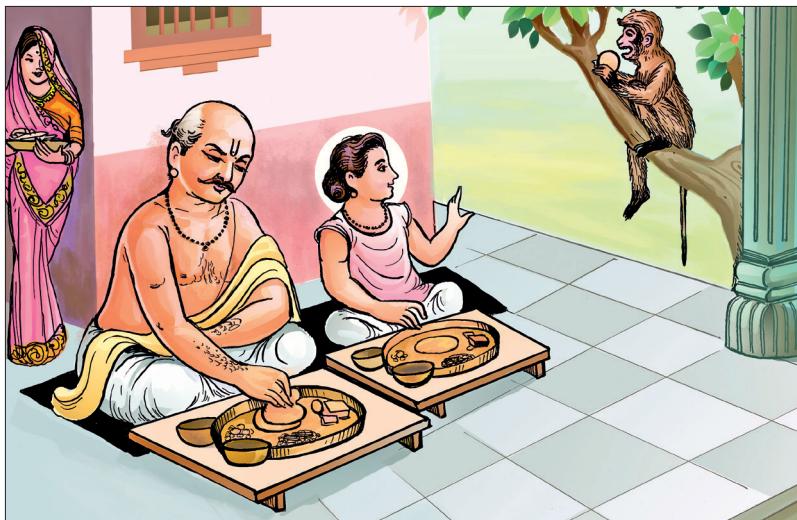
Ghanshyam awakens the birds from samadhi

Some were sitting on trees; some were pecking at the rice; others were just flitting from place to place. Ghanshyam wondered, “I do not want to harm the sparrows. What should I do?”

Suddenly an idea occurred to him. He made a loud sound. Lo and behold! All the sparrows went into samadhi. Some were on the trees, some on the ground and some were on the rice crop. Wherever they were and whatever they were doing, they all became still and silent at once.

While the sparrows were in samadhi, Ghanshyam went to Madhavram Shukla’s field nearby. There he played with his friends, Raghuvir and Buxram. Evening fell. Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai came to the field to fetch Ghanshyam. However, there was no sign of Ghanshyam. They searched and searched. Finally, they found him playing in the neighbouring field.

Dharmadev called him in a tone of rebuke, “What were you told? Were you not sent to look after the crops?” Ghanshyam calmly replied, “Father, let us go to the field and see how things are.” When they returned to the field, they saw the sparrows transfixated in their places. Some were lying on the ground, some were sitting on the trees, some others had rice in their beaks.

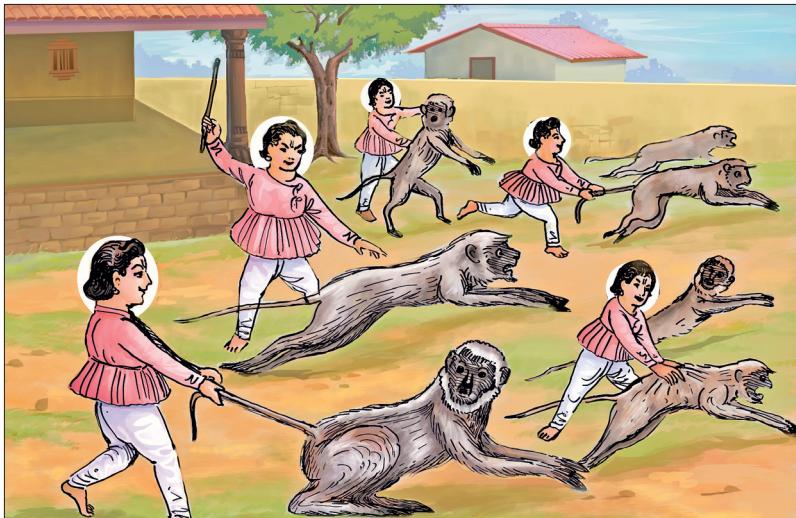


Ghanshyam puts the monkey into samadhi

But all were hushed and motionless. Dharmadev was greatly surprised and wondered whether all the sparrows had suddenly died on his farm. Both he and Rampratapbhai stood speechless for some time. Ghanshyam then gave a loud call. In an instant, all the sparrows flew away. Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai thought, "Ghanshyam is the supreme God and this must be his doing. The lives of all living beings are in his hands." With these thoughts they returned home with Ghanshyam.

## 14. Monkey in a Trance

As the harassment by evil people was increasing day by day, Dharmadev decided to leave Chhapaiya and go to Ayodhya. He put all his furniture and other household goods in a decorated cart, and the whole family left for Ayodhya. After a while, they reached the banks of the River Saryu. The luggage was then placed in a boat. And the boat carrying the family soon reached Ayodhya on the opposite bank of the Saryu. There, they took up residence in a beautiful house in the Barhatta Street of the town.



Ghanshyam chases the monkeys

One evening, Ghanshyam sat next to Dharmadev for dinner. Bhaktimata was serving them. Just then, a monkey on a tree opposite saw Ghanshyam eating his meal. Crying 'Hoop, hoop, hoop,' the monkey came up to the verandah and with a sudden dash, carried away a whole lot of rotis. He then took another long jump and got back onto the tree. As the monkey sat munching the rotis, Ghanshyam gave the monkey a steady look, and the monkey immediately went into samadhi with the rotis still in his hands. For three days, the monkey remained in samadhi, and sat there motionless.

After three days he woke up, hopped to Ghanshyam's house, and sat at his feet with folded hands. Ghanshyam blessed him and also gave him something to eat. The monkey then went back quietly and contentedly to the tree.

## 15. Monkeys Are Chased Away

Once Ghanshyam took some *puris* and yoghurt on a plate and sat down to eat on the verandah. A mischievous monkey came

up with a leap, snatched some *puris* from Ghanshyam's plate and leapt back to a branch of the tamarind tree. Ghanshyam stretched out his hand, caught hold of the monkey by the neck and threw him to the ground. The monkey yelled with pain.

On hearing the yells, a score of other monkeys came running up. They all hooted and jumped to attack Ghanshyam. Slowly they surrounded him from all sides. Dharmadev saw this. Fearing that the monkeys might kill Ghanshyam, he went inside to fetch a stick.

In the meantime, Ghanshyam assumed as many separate forms of himself as there were monkeys. Each of his forms then ran after one of the monkeys. The monkeys became frightened at seeing so many forms of Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam pushed some of the monkeys away by catching hold of their ears, and some by catching their legs. Others, he threw by their tails, and some he grabbed by their mouths and pushed them away. The rest shrieked and yelled out in fright, and ran away as fast as they could. Ghanshyam then made all his other forms disappear.

In a short while, his father came out with a big stick. He saw that all the monkeys had run away. He was delighted to see that Ghanshyam had somehow got rid of all of them. With this miracle, he became convinced that his son was none other than God himself.

## 16. Ramdatta Is Taught a Lesson

One day Ghanshyam told his friends, "Let's go to bathe in the lake." The boys got ready and, led by Ghanshyam, they all went to the lake. All of them jumped into the water, played hide and seek before swimming for a long time. In the end, they all felt very hungry.

Ghanshyam then took his friends to the mango grove. There was a big mango tree by the roadside with many ripe, tempting



Ghanshyam and his friends teach Ramdatta and the Brahmins a lesson

mangoes. Ghanshyam climbed up the tree, while his friends waited below. Ghanshyam began to pluck the ripe mangoes from the tree, and throw them down to Veni, Madhav and Prag, who caught them in a cloth stretched out under the tree. The rest of the boys kept watch.

Meanwhile, a group of Brahmins came by, led by their leader called Ramdatta. He was a tall, tough man. He told his companions, "All of you start picking up these mangoes." Hearing

this, Veni stopped them, "These mangoes have been picked by us. If you want any mangoes, pluck them from the tree yourself."

Ramdatta lost his temper. Rolling his big eyes, he tried to scare away the boys. He even tried to snatch the mangoes forcibly. Ghanshyam was watching all this sitting on the tree. Seeing Ramdatta's impudence, Ghanshyam came down quickly to the lowest branch. He bent down and as Ramdatta was busy snatching the mangoes, Ghanshyam lifted the drinking pot that was hanging on a string from the Brahmin's shoulder before rushing back to the top of the tree.

Ramdatta's anger knew no bounds. He climbed up the tree with the aim of catching Ghanshyam and pushing him off the tree. However, Ghanshyam made Ramdatta chase him from one branch to another without falling into his hands.

Ramdatta was at his wit's end. He asked the other Brahmins who were standing below, "All of you climb the tree. Let us all make efforts to catch Ghanshyam." One by one, they all climbed up the tree, and each one sat waiting on a separate branch. Ghanshyam then climbed up to the topmost branch, Ramdatta also began to climb after him to the topmost branch. But before he could reach the top, Ghanshyam disappeared.

When the Brahmins looked down, they saw Ghanshyam standing below, teasing Ramdatta by holding aloft the drinking pot with the string. Then, Ghanshyam told his friends, "Don't allow a single Brahmin to come down. Let us keep throwing stones at them." So they all began to hurl pebbles at the Brahmins. Soon, the Brahmins became tired and completely exhausted in their efforts to avoid the pebbles. Eventually, they realized their folly in challenging Ghanshyam. They thought that this boy must surely be God himself. How else could his disappearance from the tree be explained? When, at last, they beseeched him to stop the attack, Ghanshyam agreed. Ramdatta and his group of Brahmins were allowed to come down.



Ghanshyam climbs the pipal tree and looks west

Ramdatta then asked Ghanshyam to forgive them. Ghanshyam forgave them and returned the drinking pot. After paying homage to him, the Brahmins went on their way.

## 17. In Which Direction Are the Aspirants?

There was a pipal tree on the outskirts of Chhapaiya. Ghanshyam was very fond of it. Very often, he would stop playing with his friends and climb the pipal tree. He would sit there for a long time, looking west.

His friends could not understand this behaviour of Ghanshyam. One day, as usual, Ghanshyam left his friends in the middle

of a game, and climbed the pipal tree. He sat on a high branch, looking west with great concentration. His friend, Veni, saw this. Ghanshyam sat on the tree until late in the evening before he got down to return home. Immediately, Veni went up to him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him softly, "Ghanshyam, what were you looking at towards the west from high up on the tree?"

Ghanshyam replied, "I was looking in the direction where there are spiritual aspirants. Thousands of miles away from our village, in the west, are the lands of Gujarat and Kathiawad. Shri Krishna's Dwarika lies there. Many aspirants who yearn to meet God live in that region. One day I want to go there from here. I want to see the sacred places in the Himalayas and elsewhere in India too, but I want to settle in Kathiawad. The devotees there are calling me."

Veni could not follow what Ghanshyam really meant. He simply took Ghanshyam's hand as they began to walk towards home slowly and silently.

## 18. Seen in Many Mandirs at the Same Time

One day, it so happened that Ghanshyam did not come back home for lunch. Bhaktimata told Rampratapbhai, "Go and call Ghanshyam. Rampratapbhai went straight to the Hanuman Gadhi Mandir. There, the Ramayan was being narrated and Ghanshyam was wholly engrossed in listening to it. Rampratapbhai approached his brother and asked him to come home with him. "I will come soon," said Ghanshyam, and asked Rampratapbhai to leave.

There were many mandirs on the way. Rampratapbhai thought he might as well have darshan. He entered one of the mandirs, and to his surprise he found Ghanshyam, sitting



Ghanshyam listens to the Ramayan at the Hanuman Gadhi Mandir

and listening to the Ramayan. Out of curiosity, Rampratapbhai returned to Hanuman Gadhi. Sure enough, Ghanshyam was still sitting there. He was amazed. Out of interest, Rampratapbhai visited some other mandirs on the way. He saw Ghanshyam sitting in all of them.

Rampratapbhai was greatly surprised and delighted.

Returning home, he related this miracle to Dharmadev and Bhaktimata. All were surprised and very happy.

Just then Ghanshyam returned home. He washed his hands and feet before quietly sitting down for lunch with Dharmadev and his family. Bhaktimata fed Ghanshyam with even greater love and devotion than before.

## 19. The Ghost Well

Once a Nawab came to Ayodhya. Whichever village he went to, he harassed the villagers there in many ways. He kidnapped children and robbed people.



Ghanshyam forgives and blesses the ghosts in the well

Worried about this, Dharmadev took his family to Tinwa to stay there for a few days, and thus escape the Nawab's tyranny. A man called Prathit Pande lived there. His wife's name was Vachanabai. Dharmadev and his family went to stay with them. Vachanabai served delicious food to Ghanshyam every day. Bhaktimata helped her with the housework. She also drew water from the well and brought it home in large pots. However, there was danger if one went to the well after sunset. Vachanabai warned Bhaktimata, "You should never go to the well to fetch water after sunset. There are thousands of ghosts in the well, and they will harass you. So never go to the ghost well in the evening."

One evening, it so happened that all the water in the house had been used up. The sun had already set. Bhaktimata, having forgotten about the ghosts in the well, went to fetch water. She tied a rope around the neck of a pot, and let it down into the well. Before the pot could touch the water, the ghosts seized it. Bhaktimata pulled hard at the rope, but the pot would not move. She peeped into the well and saw thousands of ghosts. She

became terrified and hurried back home. When she returned, she was perspiring all over with fear. Ghanshyam saw her and asked, "Mother, what happened? Why did you come back home so hurriedly? Where did you leave the pot and the rope?" Bhaktimata told him about the ghosts she had just seen in the well.

The following morning, Ghanshyam decided to jump into the well. The villagers rushed to him, and tried to dissuade him, "Don't jump in there. The ghosts will eat you up." Ghanshyam, however, did not pay any heed to their warning, and leapt into the well. As soon as he splashed into the water, the ghosts were startled from their sleep. When they tried to get hold of Ghanshyam, his body began to radiate rays of brilliant light. Soon the ghosts began to burn due to the light.

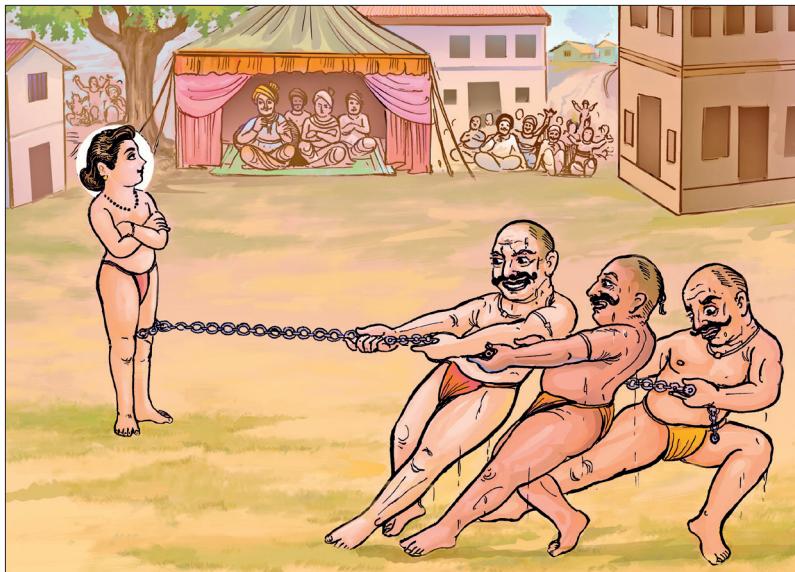
All the ghosts pleaded, "Oh God! Please save us." Ghanshyam asked them, "How do you happen to be here?" One of the ghosts replied, "Many years ago we were people with bad natures. We ate meat, consumed liquor, gambled and told lies. We got into a big quarrel with a king. Then it developed into heavy fighting, and we were all slain at this very spot. But as we were sinners, we have become ghosts and live here. Ghanshyam! You are God. Please destroy our past sins. Please forgive us and redeem us."

Hearing their pleas, Ghanshyam pardoned their sins, delivered them from bondage and sent them to the abode of Badrikashram.

From then onwards the well became free from ghosts. The village people could happily go at any time of the day or night to fetch water. The villagers all praised Ghanshyam and paid homage to him.

## 20. The Wrestlers Are Defeated

In Ayodhya, Ghanshyam practised wrestling every evening at Rajghat with Kesarisang and other friends. One morning, as Ghanshyam was wrestling with Kesarisang, another wrestler



The wrestlers challenge Ghanshyam

named Mahabali from Nepal came. Mahabali was a tall, tough and strongly built man. He had defeated many wrestlers in public contests.

Seeing Ghanshyam perform various wrestling manoeuvres, Mahabali began to laugh. So, Ghanshyam challenged him to a match. People soon realized that Ghanshyam had strength equal to that of 10,000 elephants and easily defeated Mahabali. News of Mahabali's defeat by Ghanshyam spread throughout the city of Ayodhya and the neighbouring villages. Ghanshyam's feat soon became famous.

When some of the more renowned wrestlers of Ayodhya such as Mansang, Dillisang and Bhimsang heard this, they went to the King Raidarshansinh, and boasted, "We shall wrestle with Ghanshyam and defeat him." The king advised them, "Ghanshyam may look like a child, but he is God manifest. Nobody can defeat God. You will never win in a fight with him. Please give up your foolish resolve."

However, the three wrestlers did not listen. They were

adamant. Boastfully, they said to the king, “Your Majesty, we will throw Ghanshyam to the ground before your very eyes. Give us a reward after seeing our wrestling and victory.”

The king agreed, “All right. Go and make preparations for the match. I will come to see the wrestling. You boast a great deal. But don’t get defeated and suffer disgrace.” Still, the three wrestlers continued to boast, “Ghanshyam is nothing before us. We will throw him away as easily as a mosquito.”

In a short time, a proclamation was issued all over Ayodhya, “Under the orders of His Majesty the King, the three wrestlers, Bhimsang, Dillisang and Mansang, will fight a wrestling match with Ghanshyam this evening at the ground next to the well by the tamarind tree near the house of Dharmadev. His Majesty King Raidarshansinh will be present to witness the fight. All the citizens of Ayodhya are requested to be present.”

The royal servants started cleaning the grounds near the well. Other servants prepared a canopy for the king. Soon all the preparations were complete. Special seats with thick cushions and mattresses were arranged for the king and his courtiers. Flags and bunting were put up.

Dharmadev, however, was deeply worried, “What if the giant wrestlers kill my young son? Today, the king is coming to test my son. What will happen?”

Seeing his father in such deep anxiety, Ghanshyam reassured him, “Father, don’t be afraid. Don’t worry at all. God will protect.” Ghanshyam, then, suddenly grew bigger and bigger, and appeared as a giant wrestler. After a while, he drew that form within himself, and shrunk to his original size. Seeing this, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata felt certain that he would be more than a match for the giant wrestlers. Their fears disappeared.

Evening came. Large crowds gathered to see the king, and to witness Ghanshyam reduce the ego of the three big wrestlers down to dust. The arena was soon packed. The arrival

of the king and his courtiers was announced. Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai also arrived with Ghanshyam.

Seeing Ghanshyam, the oldest of the three wrestlers, Bhimsang, made a loud sound by striking his hand on his thigh. He roared, "Come on here into the ring. Today we shall show you our might."

Ghanshyam went inside the ring with a confident smile. Bhimsang then took a huge, thick iron chain, tied it to his right leg, and stood still in the middle of the ring. He then spoke to the assembled citizens, "My right leg possesses a strength equal to that of 100 elephants. I will concede Ghanshyam to be the stronger of us two if only he can make me fall or move my right leg by pulling the chain."

Ghanshyam first bowed at his father's feet. Then he bent down to lift the chain with his left hand. With a single pull of the chain threw Bhimsang off balance. The chain broke into two. Bhimsang was hurled against the tamarind tree, and his nose and mouth started bleeding profusely.

On his stunning defeat, Bhimsang was fuming with rage. Taking another chain, he challenged Ghanshyam again, "Ghanshyam, if you think you are really that strong, then tie this chain to your leg and stand still. I will pull the chain and lift you, whirl you round and round and throw you down." Ghanshyam replied, "Come, I am ready." Ghanshyam then tied the chain to his left leg and stood still with his eyes closed.

Bhimsang then pulled hard at the chain, but Ghanshyam's leg would not move at all. All three wrestlers then pulled together with all their might, but Ghanshyam's leg did not budge even an inch. The three then tried with renewed vigour. Their nostrils blew up, and the knots in their loin-cloths loosened, but Ghanshyam stood as firm as a rock. Seeing this, the whole crowd roared with laughter.

The three wrestlers were now red with anger. With bloodshot eyes, they tried one last time, using all their strength in pulling

the chain. Suddenly, the chain broke into pieces, and all three men fell to the ground with a deafening thud. They were badly hurt. They could not even get up. All this time Ghanshyam was standing motionless at the same spot, with a smile on his face.

King Raidarshansinh then stood up to proclaim Ghanshyam's victory, and gifted him with clothes and ornaments. He distributed sweets to the people. The king asked the three wrestlers to apologize to Ghanshyam for bragging about their strength. The three wrestlers subsequently asked for pardon from Ghanshyam, and promised, "From now on we will never boast about our strength. You are God manifest. Please forgive our mistakes." Ghanshyam blessed them. Thereafter, the king seated Dharmadev and Ghanshyam on an elephant, and took them triumphantly around the city in a procession. Every house in Ayodhya celebrated Ghanshyam's victory.

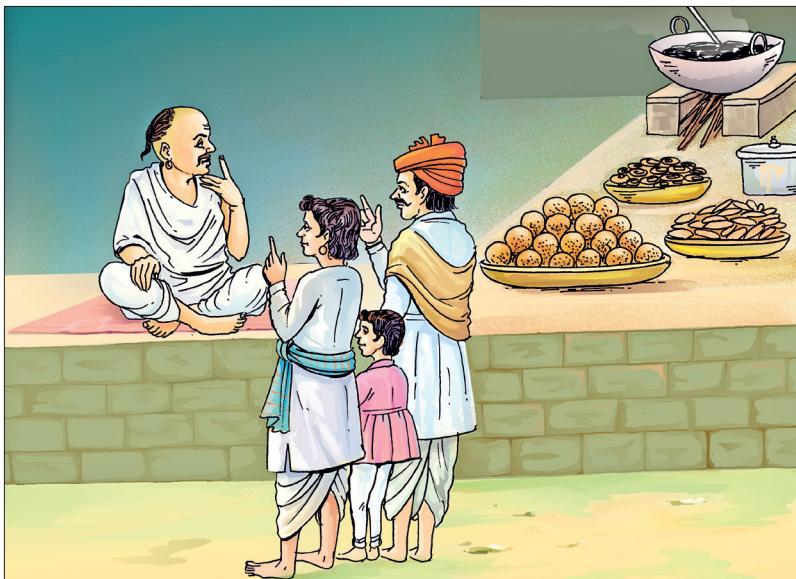
## 21. Confectioner Witnesses a Miracle

One morning Suvasinibhabhi (Rampratapbhai's wife) was busy in the kitchen cooking food. Ghanshyam entered the kitchen and said to his *bhabhi*, "Bhabhi! Bhabhi! I am very hungry. Quickly give me some food."

Bhabhi replied, "The food will be ready in a short while. If you are very hungry, shall I give you some grams or *sukhdi*?"

Ghanshyam, however, was not interested. He insisted that he wanted to eat only *penda*. Suvasinibhabhi was very surprised as she was well aware of Ghanshyam's nature of not saying anything even when he was hungry. Moreover, he did not like sweet foods. However, today, Ghanshyam was asking for *penda*. Taking her ring off her finger, she put it on a stool nearby, and proceeded in preparing dough for rotis.

Smiling, she suggested, "If you want to eat *penda*, go to the



The confectioner is surprised to see all the baskets full confectioner. There are none here.”

Ghanshyam said, “Yes, yes, I will go there.” With this, he grabbed her ring and ran away. Suvasinibhabhi was startled and ran to catch Ghanshyam. But he could not be caught. He made her run from one room to another and then to another and so on. She threatened, “Your elder brother will beat you for stealing the ring to eat *penda*.” Ghanshyam replied, “How can you possibly say I have stolen your ring? I took it before your very eyes.”

Bhabhi realized that it was not possible to catch Ghanshyam. So she locked the room door from the outside and trapped him inside. When she turned around, however, she saw Ghanshyam standing in the courtyard outside, laughing and teasing her by showing the ring.

“What is this? I just locked him inside. How could he have come out?” she wondered.

Ghanshyam ran out of the house with the ring and went directly to the confectionery shop. Holding the ring before the

confectioner, he said, “If you give me all the sweets, I will give you this ring.”

The confectioner greedily eyed the gold ring. He filled all the sweets in baskets to give to Ghanshyam in exchange for the ring. Ghanshyam took the baskets and feasted with his friends in a farm.

After a while, Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai returned home. They heard about Ghanshyam’s mischief and became angry. Ghanshyam soon returned, running inside to sit directly on Bhaktimata’s lap.

Rampratapbhai asked him, “Where is the ring, Ghanshyam?”

“What ring? I don’t know anything about any ring,” Ghanshyam replied.

Rampratapbhai slapped him and Ghanshyam broke down crying. Suvasinibhabhi ran and picked up Ghanshyam. Bhaktimata also intervened. Eventually, everyone went to the confectionery shop, together with Ghanshyam. Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai asked the confectioner, “Has Ghanshyam given you a ring?”

The confectioner replied, “Yes, I gave him all the sweets in my shop in exchange for the ring. Look inside. Everything is empty.”

Crying, Ghanshyam said, “No, no, he is lying. I have not taken his sweets. Let us go inside his shop.” Ghanshyam then held Dharmadev’s and Rampratapbhai’s hands and led them into the shop.

Once inside, Ghanshyam said, “Look, all the sweets are here. All the baskets are full.”

Everyone saw that all the baskets of sweets were untouched. The confectioner was surprised on seeing this. He folded his hands and said to Dharmadev, “Dharmadev! This son of yours is indeed very great.”

Then, taking the ring from the confectioner, everyone happily returned home.

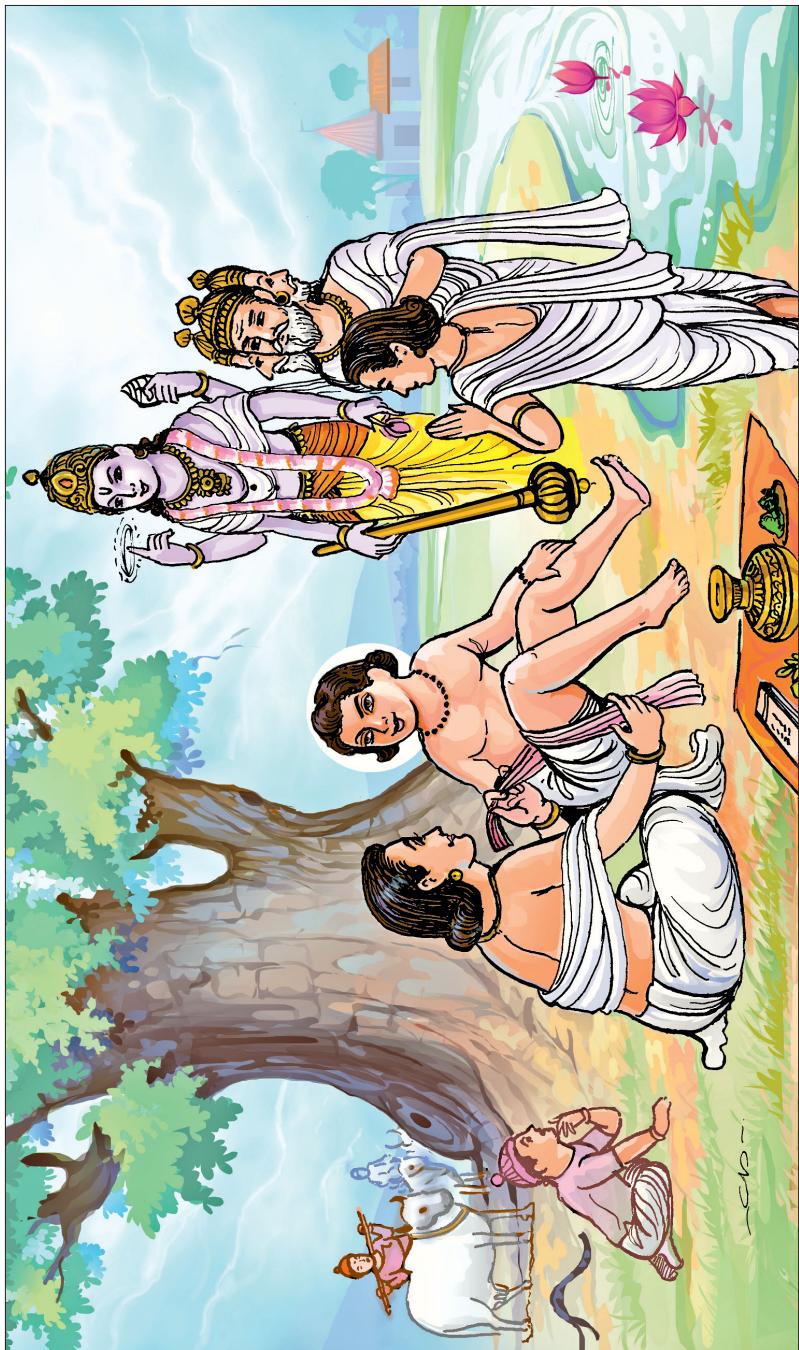
## 22. Khampa Talavdi

Once, Ghanshyam went to Targaam with Rampratapbhai and Suvasinibhabhi. There was a small forest a short distance away from the house, and in the middle of it was a beautiful little pond. The tank was surrounded by green grass with many lovely flowers and trees. Cowherds took their cattle to graze in the surrounding fields. Ghanshyam used to go there every evening to play. He would climb trees, and play hide and seek with his friends. They would also pick roses, jasmine and other flowers. His friends would make a garland of flowers and place it around Ghanshyam's neck.

One evening, Ghanshyam was standing near the pond. The cowherds were returning home with their cows. Ghanshyam called out to the cows, and they all came running, and stood around him. The cowherds tried very hard to call the cows back, but they would not budge from where they were standing near Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam patted and caressed the cows for a while, and then said to them, "You may go now." The cows promptly obeyed, turned around, and went home mooing.

After the cows were gone, Ghanshyam climbed up the tamarind tree by the banks of the pond and played there for some time. Then, as he was coming down, his foot slipped and a sharp broken branch on the tree pierced his right thigh. Ghanshyam fell near the edge of the water with his wound bleeding intensely. This alarmed his friends. One of them, Sukhanandan, ran to call Rampratapbhai. Meanwhile, Indra, Brahma, Vishnu, Chandra and the other devas came down from the sky. Indra at once summoned Ashwini Kumar, the physician of the devas. Ashwini Kumar came hurriedly and bandaged the wound. All the devas then bowed to Ghanshyam before disappearing into the sky.

Just then, Rampratapbhai arrived on the scene with Sukhanandan. He saw a bandage around Ghanshyam's thigh, "Who gave



The divine physicians treat Ghanshyam's injury

you this treatment? Who applied the bandage?" he enquired anxiously. Veni replied, "Ashwini Kumar, the physician of the devas came down from the sky, and applied the medicine and bandage." Rampratapbhai was overjoyed when he heard this. He then took Ghanshyam on his shoulder, and brought him home.

Suvasinibhabhi was waiting anxiously for Ghanshyam. When she saw him, she at once took him in her arms, and embraced him lovingly. She asked him, "Where is the injury?" He replied, "I have not been injured at all." When he opened the bandage, Suvasinibhabhi did not see any injury. All she could see was a faint mark at the spot where the branch had pierced. She was greatly delighted.

Ever since this incident occurred, the pond has been known as 'Khampa Talavdi'; where Khampa means the 'broken branch' and Talavadi means 'pond'.

## 23. Sixteen Signs of God

Once, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata went on a pilgrimage taking their three sons, Rampratapbhai, Ghanshyam and Ichchharam, with them. Vasantabai and Chandanmasi also accompanied them. On the way they came to the village of Gunda, where there was a small mandir with a small *murti* of Thakorji. For the evening *arti*, Dharmadev took his three sons to the mandir for Thakorji's darshan. The bells rang, the gongs sounded, and the drums rolled. The *arti* of Thakorji began. Ghanshyam was standing in front of the *murti*, engaged in Thakorji's darshan.

Just then the *murti* of Thakorji stepped down from the throne and came to Ghanshyam. Thakorji took off the garland from his own neck and put it around Ghanshyam's neck before returning to his throne. The *pujari*, Dharmadev and all the devotees who had come for Thakorji's darshan witnessed the miracle. News of the miracle soon spread throughout the whole village.



The *murti* of Thakorji garlands Ghanshyam

The news eventually reached King Gumansinh. The next morning, the king decided to test Ghanshyam. He sent a messenger to deliver an order that Dharmadev and his three sons should present themselves at the king's house at 10 a.m. Accordingly, Dharmadev arrived with his three sons at the appointed hour.

The king asked Dharmadev, “Which of your three sons is Ghanshyam, the one who has shown all a miracle?” Dharmadev put his hand on Ghanshyam’s head and introduced him, “This is my middle son Ghanshyam.”

The king thought to himself, “If Ghanshyam is manifest God, then two tests will settle the issue. First, it is mentioned in the shastras that God does not cast a shadow. Secondly, they also say that there are 16 sacred marks on God’s feet. So, we can easily prove whether Ghanshyam is really manifest God or not. If he is not, then surely there is fraud and deception here.”

Thinking thus, the king called Dharmadev and Ghanshyam out into the open compound where there was bright sunshine. To the king’s amazement, Ghanshyam did not have a shadow, whereas Dharmadev had one.

The king then asked Ghanshyam to sit with his legs stretched out. Ghanshyam sat on a seat with his legs straightened out. On Ghanshyam’s right sole there were nine signs: *ashtakon*, *urdhva-rekha*, *swastik*, *jambu*, *jav*, *vajra*, *ankush*, *ketu* and *padma*. On the instep of his left foot were seven signs: *trikon*, *kalash*, *gopad*, *dhanush*, *meen*, *ardha-chandra* and *vyom*. Moreover, the *urdhva-rekha* or the vertical line on both the feet emerged from between the big toe and the first toe and reached towards the heel. The king was now convinced that Ghanshyam was truly God in person. His joy knew no bounds.

Queen Kunvarba was also overjoyed. The king and queen both bowed at Ghanshyam’s feet. They arranged for a beautiful cot with silk cushions, and seated Dharmadev and Ghanshyam on it. They performed *pujan* of both father and son by applying sandalwood paste and kumkum to their foreheads, and by offering flowers. They performed *arti* of Ghanshyam and presented him with a velvet cap embroidered with gold threads and a *surval*. They then bade them farewell with great respect.

On the third day, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata left on a

pilgrimage of other sacred places, along with their three sons. During their journey, they passed through Lucknow and Kanpur before heading back to Ayodhya.

Ichchharamji was the youngest of the three brothers. He had not yet learnt how to walk with ease. So Vasantabai carried him in her arms, while Ghanshyam walked holding his mother's hand.

On the way, Ghanshyam protested to Bhaktimata "Why does Ichchharam have to be carried? Why not me?" Bhaktimata tried to explain to him, "Ichchharam is the youngest and is light. He has not even learnt how to walk yet, whereas you can walk easily. Besides, you are too heavy to lift. So, you should walk." Ghanshyam still insisted, "I am not heavy at all! I am also very tired now. Actually Ichchharam is heavier than me. Why does he still need to be carried?"

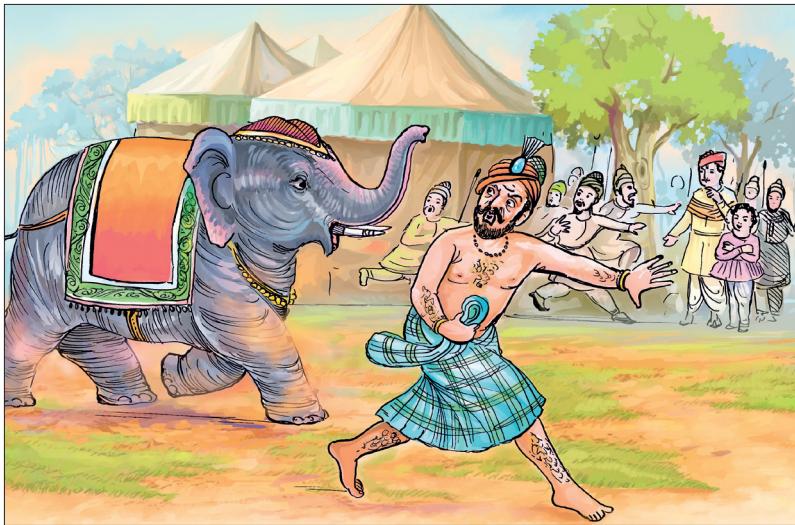
With these words, Ghanshyam used his powers to increase Ichchharam's weight so much that Vasantabai had to put him down. She remarked to Bhaktimata, "Why has Ichchharam suddenly become so heavy? He does not feel this heavy every day."

Bhaktimata smiled and replied, "It is all due to Ghanshyam's divine power. Because he does not want to walk, he has made Ichchharam very heavy. Chandanmasi, please carry Ghanshyam in your arms for a while. Everything will soon be back to normal."

Thus, Chandanmasi lifted Ghanshyam in her arms and carried him. She did not feel any weight at all. When Vasantabai carried Ichchharam again, she discovered that his weight had become normal. Seeing such pranks of Ghanshyam, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata started laughing.

## 24. Ghanshyam Stops the Killing

Baldidhar was a brother-in-law of Dharmadev. Baldidhar and his brother, Morligangadhar, were both serving as sepoy in the army of the local king.



The elephant chases the cruel king

Once the king's army came to the village of Ballampadhari. Dharmadev thought that since Ballampadhari was close to Ayodhya, he would go and see Baldidhar and Morligangadhar. He soon left for Ballampadhari, taking Ghanshyam and Rampratapbhai with him.

The king's army had camped in a garden on the outskirts of Ballampadhari village. A watchman was standing at the entrance of the garden. Dharmadev told the watchman, "We want to see Baldidhar and Morligangadhar. They are sepoy in the king's army. Kindly take us to where they are."

The watchman readily agreed, "Just follow me. I will take you to them." He took them to a pipal tree. There was a big tent near the pipal tree. The king was sitting in the tent with some of his men, and had just ordered the killing of some goats, cows and other animals.

Seeing the heartless slaughter going on inside the tent, Dharmadev was overwhelmed with anguish. Ghanshyam saw his father's grief-stricken face and inquired, "Father, what has happened, ?" Dharmadev pointed to the door of the tent.

When Ghanshyam looked inside, he saw animals being butchered. He felt immense pity for the animals. He made a wish to put an end to the killing. The moment he so wished, all the horses and elephants in the king's army broke loose from their chains and madly rushed towards the tent. While some of the elephants uprooted the tents with their trunks, others rushed inside them.

The whole village was filled with the noise and clamour of neighing horses and trumpeting elephants. The sepoy in the tent ran for their lives. The king, who was sitting in the tent bare-chested, also ran for his life when he saw the mad elephants. While he ran, his dhoti became loose. Luckily, he managed to hold it in place with his hand. The king hid himself beneath the pipal tree. Still, the elephant came running towards the tree. On seeing this the king climbed up the tree to safety. The elephant backed off and went away.

With his divine powers, Ghanshyam then shook the pipal tree vigorously. All the branches shook, and the leaves started falling. The king trembled with fear. When he looked down, the whole earth seemed to be shaking. At once, he started repenting for his sins, and began to cry loudly. He prayed, "Oh God! Please save me." He was afraid that he would soon be thrown off the tree and be killed.

When the king pleaded repeatedly, Ghanshyam entered the tree and spoke to the king. "You and your army are committing grave sins by killing innocent animals. I am, therefore, very angry with you. If you want to live, take a pledge here and now that you will never kill again. Otherwise, you are doomed. The God to whom you are praying is actually standing opposite this tree next to Dharmadev, in the form of Ghanshyam. Ask him to forgive you and you will be instantly freed."

Hearing these words, the king was speechless. He realized that he should obey God's wishes. Immediately, he vowed that

from then on he would never kill any innocent animals or allow anyone else in his army to do so. He pledged, "Oh God! I take a solemn oath that henceforth I shall never kill or allow any killing." Hearing the king's prayer, Ghanshyam felt compassion for him. Immediately he stopped shaking the pipal tree. All the elephants and horses then went back quietly to their places to eat grass.

The king slowly got down from the tree. He fell to his knees before Ghanshyam and pleaded, "Oh Ghanshyam! You are God. I am your humble servant. Please forgive me of my flaws and sins. I shall never kill again."

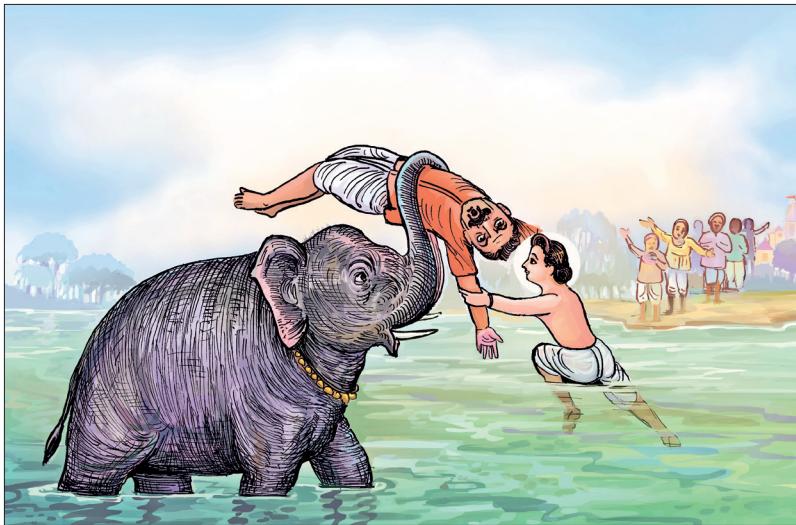
After the king had spoken Ghanshyam blessed him. The king then bowed to Ghanshyam and Dharmadev and then returned to his tent to rest. Dharmadev then met Baldidhar and Morligangadhar before returning to Ayodhya with Ghanshyam and Rampratapbhai.

## 25. The Mahout Is Saved

There was a very wealthy man named Baldevji who lived in Ayodhya. He had tamed a strong elephant and employed a mahout to look after the elephant. The mahout, however, daily stole the sweets from the food meant for the elephant, and thus deprived it of some of its daily rations.

The elephant saw this day after day. One day, it became furious. At noon that day, the mahout had taken the elephant to the lake, as usual, for a bath. He led the elephant into the water and started scrubbing its body with a tile. Deciding to take revenge, the elephant lifted the mahout with its trunk, and held him high up in the air with the intention of dashing him against the water.

People standing on the banks of the lake saw this and were horrified. Just then, Dharmadev was passing by with



Ghanshyam saves the mahout

Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam saw the catastrophe that would befall the mahout and felt compassion for him. He at once assumed another form, entered the water, and went up to the elephant. He first freed the mahout from the elephant's trunk. He then pacified the elephant, gently mounted it and walked it out of the water.

Once out of the water, the elephant walked like a gentle cow. The people on the banks saw this miracle. They were also amazed to see Ghanshyam in two separate forms. When the elephant came out of the water, the second form of Ghanshyam disappeared. Then the original form of Ghanshyam mounted the elephant and rode it home. There, the mahout ordered the elephant to bend down. When the elephant bent down obediently, Ghanshyam dismounted.

The mahout bowed to Ghanshyam with deep devotion and said, "Oh Ghanshyam! Had you not calmed the elephant and saved me from its wrath today, I would surely have been killed. You are God. I shall not henceforth steal its food." After blessing the mahout, Ghanshyam returned home.

## 26. A New Set of Teeth

One day, Ghanshyam said to Suvasinibhabhi, “Bhabhi, my molar teeth are causing severe pain. I cannot chew rotis. Please prepare *shiro* for me instead.” Suvasinibhabhi replied, “Fine.”

*Shiro* was soon ready and Suvasinibhabhi called all the members of the family to eat. She served rotis to Dharmadev, Rampratapbhai and Ichchharam, while to Ghanshyam she served the soft *shiro*. Ghanshyam gave some *shiro* to his younger brother, Ichchharam. Ghanshyam ate just one or two morsels of *shiro*, leaving the rest on the plate. He then washed his hands. Seeing this, Suvasinibhabhi called him out into the courtyard behind the kitchen and enquired, “Dear brother! Is your molar tooth giving you too much trouble?”

Ghanshyam replied, “Yes, Bhabhi, it is aching a lot. It is also loose. If you pull out all the loose teeth, the pain will lessen.” With these words, Ghanshyam opened his mouth and, with his divine powers, loosened all his teeth. Suvasinibhabhi put her fingers into his mouth to pull out the loose molar tooth. Quickly, she pulled it out. Ghanshyam then said to her, “Bhabhi, this other tooth is also loose and gives me a lot of pain. Please pull it out too.” In this way, one by one, Ghanshyam had all his teeth removed. When Suvasinibhabhi saw the toothless mouth of Ghanshyam she became worried. She called out to Bhaktimata and, pointing to Ghanshyam’s mouth, told her, “Mother, Ghanshyam complained to me that he had a toothache, and that his teeth were loose. So, he made me pull them all out. How will he eat now?” When Bhaktimata saw the small heap of teeth, she too became worried. She told Ghanshyam, “Open your mouth.” When Ghanshyam opened his mouth, both she and Suvasinibhabhi were stunned. They saw that Ghanshyam had a new set of teeth in his mouth. Both, Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi, were astonished and overjoyed at this miracle.



Swans from Manasarovar pick the pearls from Ghanshyam's hand

Ghanshyam then picked up the teeth lying on the ground. Suvasinibhabhi made him open his fist. Instead of teeth, she saw pearls. Ghanshyam soon raised his hand and a flock of swans from Manasarovar swooped down from the sky. One by one, they picked up the pearls from Ghanshyam's hand and flew away.

On seeing this divine episode Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi realized once more that Ghanshyam was indeed God manifest. They humbly bowed to him.

## 27. A Feast for His Friends

Once, in Chhapaiya, Ghanshyam took his friends out to play on the banks of Lake Meen. They were so engrossed in their game, that they did not know it was already 4.00 p.m. Veni, Prag and Sukhanandan were all hungry. They thought of hurrying home to eat. Ghanshyam was, of course, aware of what was going on in their minds. He asked them, "Are you all very hungry?" All of them replied, "Yes!"

Ghanshyam proposed, “If you do as I say, I will feed all of you here.” The friends readily agreed, “Oh yes, we are ready. We are prepared to do whatever you ask. But you will have to give us all plenty of food.” Ghanshyam said, “If you agree to play with me until sunset, I will certainly feed you all.” The friends all replied, “Yes, yes. We’ll play.”

Ghanshyam then took out his handkerchief and tied it to a branch of the mango tree nearby. He told his friends, “Come on, let’s go to bathe in Lake Meen. This handkerchief of mine will soon be filled with sweets.” All of them then went to Meen lake for a bath. They played in the water for a long time. Ghanshyam then called them out, “Come on everyone, out of the water. It will soon be dark. My elder brother will scold me for being late.” All of them came out of the water, dried themselves and put on their clothes.

Veniram reminded Ghanshyam, “Ghanshyam, you told us you would feed us sweets. Please bring the sweets. We are very hungry.” Ghanshyam replied, “Oh sure! Come on, let’s climb the mango tree. The sweets have been kept there.” They all ran to the mango tree and, one by one, they climbed up. Ghanshyam went to the branch where he had tied his handkerchief. He then started serving delicious sweets from the handkerchief to all his friends. His friends wondered how the sweets had got into the handkerchief. Ghanshyam read their thoughts, and he issued an order. Within seconds, eight celestial maidens descended from the sky with plates full of food in their hands. They were the eight *siddhis*, and all of them were very beautiful. Each had a gold plate in one hand in which there were 32 items. In the other hand, they each had a gold water pot full of cool drinking water. Ghanshyam told all his friends to get down and sit in a circle.

The eight *siddhis* then started serving the delicious food to the boys, while singing the praises of Ghanshyam. The boys ate to their hearts’ content and drank the cool water. The *siddhis*



The eight Siddhis serve Ghanshyam and his friends

bowed to Ghanshyam before disappearing into the sky. By then the sun had set. All the children returned home with Ghanshyam, happily dancing and singing.

## 28. Thousands Are Fed and Humbled

Although resident in Ayodhya, Dharmadev and his family often came to visit relatives in their native Chhapaiya.

Once, a band of roaming sannyasis came to Chhapaiya, and camped on the banks of Khampa pond. The group consisted of a thousand *bawas* and sannyasis. Some of them had matted hair; some had only a tuft of hair on their heads; others had long beards, while some had shaven heads. Most of the sannyasis carried tongs in their hands, while some had spears. There were some who had swords, while others had long sticks or daggers.

When the band settled down near the pond, they beat their drums, blew their conches and played their pipes, filling the air



The *bawas* are given grains

with music. Within no time they set up their tents and went to bathe in the pond.

Ghanshyam, taking his friends Veni, Madhav, Prag and others with him, went to have a look at the *bawas*. After bathing, five leading *bawas* proceeded to the inner village to find provisions for the whole group. Meanwhile, the village chief, Motibhai Tarvadi, fearing that it would not be possible to collect enough provisions for so many *bawas*, had run away to a neighbouring village.

The *bawas* came into Chhapaiya and enquired, "Who is Dharmadev?" The villagers directed them to Dharmadev's house. When they reached Dharmadev's house, they made a loud clatter with their tongs and spoke arrogantly, "We are a band of a thousand *bawas*. We have camped on the banks of Khampa Pond. We want grains and vegetables to cook our food."

On hearing their demand, Dharmadev replied politely, "In my house I do not have enough grains, ghee or other provisions to feed a thousand *bawas*. If you like, I can give you enough for

about a hundred. Also, almost all our food stocks in the house are exhausted. Please take what I can give you and collect the rest from the village."

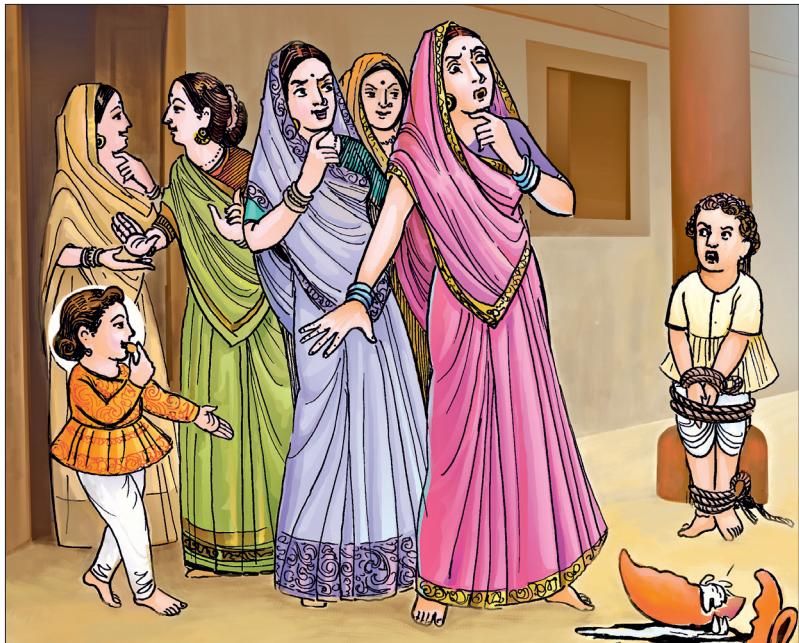
The *bawas*, however, were not willing to accept this. They struck their tongs harder and more angrily, declaring, "No, no. We will not go to anybody else. You are the greatest gentleman in this village. You will have to give. Don't tell lies. Give us what we want now."

Hearing this, Dharmadev was greatly worried. He did not know what to do. When Ghanshyam came to know about his father's predicament, he immediately returned home. He asked, "Father, What has happened? Why are you worried?" Dharmadev told him about the *bawas*. Ghanshyam reassured his father at once, "Don't worry at all, Father. Start taking out grains from our store. They won't get exhausted."

Suvasinibhabhi started to draw grains, flour, gur, ghee, etc and other rations out of the large storage vessels. The more she took the more remained. She never reached the bottom. In a short time, there was a huge heap of various provisions. The *bawas* were overjoyed, and began to praise Dharmadev. As they got sufficient grains for over a thousand people, they blessed Dharmadev and went away. Dharmadev wondered, "From where did such large quantities of supplies arrive? Now, not a single grain would be left in the house." With this thought, he checked the vessels. To his joy and surprise, he found that all of them were as full as before. It seemed as if nothing had been taken away. He knew at once that this was yet another of Ghanshyam's miracles.

## 29. Lakshmibai Sees a Miracle

In Chhapaiya, Ghanshyam would often go along with his friends to one or the other of his neighbours' homes to have a little fun. The boys would enter a house secretly, take the



Lakshmibai finds Veni tied up instead of Ghanshyam

earthen pot from a basket suspended from the ceiling, and enjoy a feast of milk, curd, *makhan* or whatever else was in the pot.

One day, Ghanshyam accompanied his friend, Veniram, to his house. When they got to Veniram's house, they saw Lakshmibai, his mother, sitting outside in the courtyard, separating chaff from the grain. Ghanshyam and Veniram played around for some time, and then quietly entered the house and slipped into the kitchen. There, they took *makhan* from a pot, mixed sugar in it, and began to eat the mixture with relish. When Lakshmibai came into the kitchen, she saw the boys eating the sweetened *makhan*. Seeing Lakshmibai, Ghanshyam and Veniram jumped out of the window and ran away.

Lakshmibai was furious. She immediately went to Bhaktimata's house and complained to her, "Mother, your Ghanshyam comes daily to my house to steal. He enters the house silently, goes into the kitchen and eats ghee, milk, curd,

*makhan* and other items. Besides, he spoils my son by teaching him to steal. I saw it all with my own eyes today. Why don't you tell your son off?"

Bhaktimata quietly replied, "My Ghanshyam would never steal anything. He is a very well-behaved boy and always obedient. On the other hand, your Veni very often comes to my house, and eats whatever he can lay his hands on when no one is looking. At times, he even takes things from our house. Still, we have never complained. Yet, you complain about my Ghanshyam. I cannot believe what you say about him. If you see Ghanshyam stealing again, catch him, tie up his hands and feet, and call me. Only then will I believe you."

"All right. But I am not lying. If Ghanshyam ever comes to my house again, I will tie up his hands and feet, and show you. I shall prove to the whole village that Ghanshyam is a thief, and not the good boy that people think," replied Lakshmibai before returning home.

When Ghanshyam heard about this complaint, he thought that Lakshmibai should be taught a lesson.

One afternoon, Ghanshyam, along with Veniram, entered the latter's house through the back door. They saw that Lakshmibai was having a nap. The two boys went straight to the kitchen, took the earthen-pot and ate all the curd in it. Unfortunately for the boys, Lakshmibai woke up just at that moment, as she heard some rattling noise in the kitchen. Thinking that it might be a cat, she hurried to the kitchen.

There she saw curd stuck to the lips of Ghanshyam and Veniram, and the pot which they had both emptied. She let her son, Veniram, escape, but caught hold of Ghanshyam. "Today, I have caught you in the very act of stealing. I will make a full complaint. I will let the whole village know that the yoghurt thief has now been caught." Lakshmibai duly tied up Ghanshyam's hands and feet tightly with a cord.

Flushed with victory, she shouted to everyone she met, "Come and see, I have finally caught the thief." She then went straight to Bhaktimata and told her how she had at last caught Ghanshyam. "Today I have caught the thief, and tied his hands and feet. Every day he comes and steals, and eats all the good items in the kitchen. Come, I will show you how well behaved your son is." She then took Bhaktimata and all the neighbours to her house.

Meanwhile, when Lakshmibai was away, Ghanshyam had used his divine powers to free himself from the ropes and bind Veniram's hands and feet instead. He had quietly slipped out and reached home by a different route.

Soon Lakshmibai came to her house, bringing all the neighbours along. Little did she suspect the twist that had taken place. She opened the door of the kitchen and declared without looking, "Look at Ghanshyam, the thief." However, what Bhaktimata and the others saw was Veniram who had been bound with ropes and not Ghanshyam! All the neighbours began to laugh and said, "What a fool this woman is! She has tied up her own son, Veniram, and has now brought us to expose him."

Hearing the laughter, Lakshmibai turned round. She was shocked to see that Veniram, and not Ghanshyam, was bound with ropes. She felt terribly embarrassed. Just then, while eating some gur, Ghanshyam came to Lakshmibai's house as if on a casual visit. With a mischievous glint in his eyes, he enquired, "What has happened, Mother?"

Bhaktimata took Ghanshyam aside and laughed at the spectacle. All the neighbours too went back chuckling to themselves over Lakshmibai's loss of face.

When she was alone, Lakshmibai began to think about this puzzling episode. She thought, "There is no doubt that it was Ghanshyam whom I had caught, and whose hands and feet

I had tied. Certainly, Ghanshyam is a miraculous child. He must be God. Only then is this possible.” By now, she had freed Veniram. When Lakshmibai saw the truth, she went to Bhaktimata. She begged for forgiveness for her ignorance and bowed to Ghanshyam with the faith that he was God manifest in human form.

## 30. The Importance of Ekadashi

It was the auspicious day of Ekadashi. Ghanshyam got up very early, bathed, performed puja and went for darshan to the Hanuman Gadhi Mandir. Mohandas, the mahant of the mandir, was narrating the story of Bhagwan Ram from the Ram-charit-manas shastra. During the course of the story, he read about the glory of observing and fasting on Ekadashi, “If we observe one Ekadashi, we obtain merits equal to the merits obtained by performing a thousand Ashwamedh Yagnas.”

Hearing this, Ghanshyam asked, “Mahantji, if that is so, then why is it that so many people do not observe Ekadashi?”

Mohandas gave a long explanation, “God has given us this rare human body. Why then should we inflict suffering on this precious body by fasting on Ekadashi? This body has not been given for suffering pain and misery. Since the observance of Ekadashi was given up in Jagannathpuri, people have stopped doing it. People believe that to remain hungry is to inflict suffering to one’s *atma*. So, we should eat and drink to nourish our body. Today only those who do not have anything to eat or drink observe Ekadashi. So little boy, bear this in mind. Don’t make your body suffer by fasting.”

Ghanshyam thought, “The *bawa* is misleading the people by spreading false beliefs. He should be taught the truth.”

Ghanshyam said to him, “*Bawaji*, do not preach such wrong talks incorrect information. It is a sin to talk contradicting the

scriptures. There is much glory in the observance of Ekadashi. Everyone should wholeheartedly observe Ekadashi.”

The *bawa* was annoyed at Ghanshyam, “You, little one, you have the audacity to teach me my duty? Are you not ashamed of yourself?”

Ghanshyam simply fixed his eyes on the *bawa*, who immediately went into samadhi. He found himself transported to Yampuri. There he was severely beaten by the servants of Yam. They scolded him, “You have never observed Ekadashi, and have fattened yourself by eating and drinking merrily. Also, you have misguided other people. So, today we will not let you go.” Thus, they thrashed him even more soundly.

In the mandir, the body of the *bawa* began to toss about. He screamed, “Save me please, save me. Yam’s servants are beating me. They are punishing me because I do not observe Ekadashi.” The heavy beating made the *bawa* ache all over. After a while, he emerged from samadhi. Immediately, he prostrated himself at the feet of Ghanshyam.

The *bawa* then addressed the assembly, “Listen everyone! This Ghanshyam is no ordinary little boy. He is God supreme. I ignored him. I did not explain the truth, so I had to suffer a beating in Yampuri. My bones and ribs are still aching. I was punished in Yampuri because I have not observed Ekadashi all these years. I, therefore, pledge today before Ghanshyam that I will from now, regularly observe Ekadashi in the proper way. Also, I shall preach to others to do the same. All of you should begin observing Ekadashi from today.”

With these words, the *bawa* prostrated at the feet of Ghanshyam, seated him on his own seat, offered *pujan* to him, and begged to be forgiven. All those present also bowed to Ghanshyam, and went home with the resolution that they would fast on Ekadashi. Ghanshyam then blessed the *bawa* before returning home.



Vashrambhai chases Ghanshyam during the ceremonial run

## 31. Ghanshyam Is Given the Sacred Thread

Ghanshyam was now nearly seven years old. Bhaktimata thought it was time to give him the sacred thread. She sent for a Brahmin named Harikrishna Upadhyay. He was the main priest of the whole town. He was a very pure and simple Brahmin. When he received the call, he at once took his book, put on his turban, covered himself with a *khes* and came to Dharmadev's house.

Dharmadev received him with due respect, and gave him an appropriate seat. He then said to the Brahmin, "We want to give the sacred thread to our son, Ghanshyam. Please confirm an auspicious day for the ceremony." Harikrishna Upadhyay put on his spectacles, arranged his *khes* comfortably, and then, opened his book and began to count on his fingers. After making his calculations, he declared Monday, 7 March 1789 CE (Fagan *sud* 10, Samvat 1845) to be an auspicious day for the thread giving ceremony.

Accordingly, Dharmadev began preparations for the sacred thread ceremony. He sent out invitations to all relatives, sadhus and Brahmins. He had the whole of Barhatta Street of Ayodhya beautifully decorated, the house painted anew, and pictures of birds and deer and other animals drawn on the walls. A large shamiana was set up beneath a neem tree outside the house. Beautiful *rangoli* patterns using coloured powder were drawn on the floor. A colourful tree of glass was made and placed in the middle of the ground, with a *divo* at its centre. Small mirrors were hung around the tree reflecting a myriad of lights. Decorative glass pieces and chandeliers of different shapes and sizes were fixed all around. Velvet cloths of different colours and arches of *asopalav* leaves added to the splendour of the shamiana. Everyone was wonderstruck by the glittering splendour.

From early morning on 7 March, Dharmadev's house resounded with the melodious tunes of *shahanai* and women singing bhajans. Harikrishna Upadhyay, the priest, along with other Brahmins, began to chant the sacred Vedic mantras while offering ghee, grains, sesame, and other items into the *yagna*. The main priest recited mantras as Ghanshyam took a pledge before the fire-god. Rambali, the barber, was called, and Ghanshyam had his head shaved. He then bathed and put on a yellow silk *pitambar*.

When Ghanshyam entered the *yagna* arena, he bowed to his parents and offered oblations. Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh and other gods descended from the sky. Flowers were showered from the sky. Ghanshyam received the guru-mantra, put on the clothes of a celibate, tied a waistband, and held a blade of *moonj* grass in his hand. He also held a stick of a *palash* tree and a begging bowl in his hands. He then asked for alms from his mother, and gave what he received to the priest. By this time it was noon. The main ceremony for donning the sacred thread then took place. In the afternoon, Ghanshyam put on the clothes of a young boy (*batuk*), and went to the village square for a ceremonial run.

His maternal uncle, Vashrambhai, stood in front. Behind them stood Dharmadev and other relatives. And last of all, Behind them stood the women, who were singing bhajans. All stood in the square facing north. All of them thought that when Ghanshyam ran, his maternal uncle would quickly catch him and bring him back. Ghanshyam, however, had other thoughts, "I want to liberate innumerable souls in this world. I will, therefore, run directly to the Himalayas. My maternal uncle will never be able to catch me. From the Himalayas, I shall travel everywhere to liberate people."

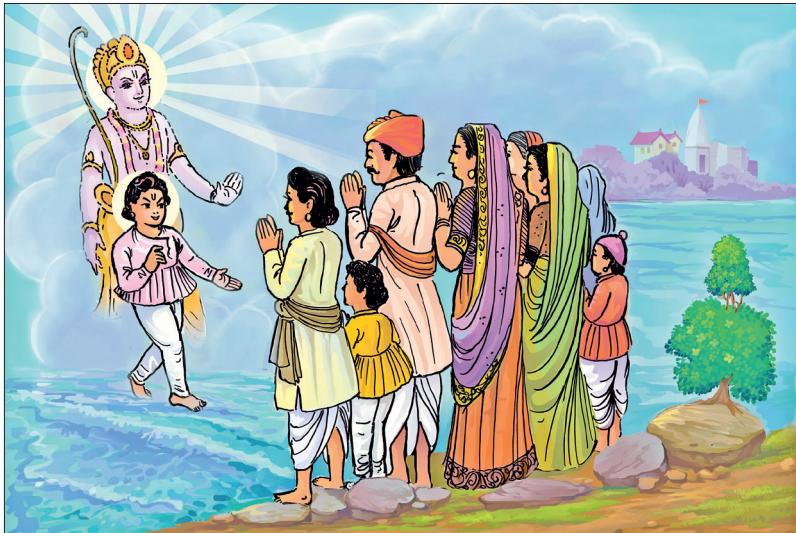
With these thoughts in his mind, Ghanshyam started to run, followed by his maternal uncle. His uncle ran very fast, but he could not catch Ghanshyam and soon became exhausted. He praised Ghanshyam's prowess as a runner, and prayed to him, "Oh Ghanshyam! Please allow me to catch you and maintain my honour. Your parents will be pained if you go away."

Hearing his uncle's prayer, Ghanshyam thought, "My parents are pure and innocent. I should not leave them." So he returned. Vashrambhai was overjoyed to see him come back. He lifted him on his shoulders and brought him back to the *yagna* arena to everyone's relief. He gave five rupees to Ghanshyam, which Ghanshyam handed over to his father. Ghanshyam then bowed to all. Finally, sitting by the side of his mother, he ate his meal consisting of ghee, gur and rice. It was the last ritual of the day.

Dharmadev, then, fed the Brahmins and sadhus, gifted them clothes and money, and bade them a warm farewell.

## 32. Ghanshyam Is Seen as Ramchandra

One afternoon, Ghanshyam took his friends to Lake Meen in Chhapaiya to bathe. All the boys jumped into the water at once for a swim. Ghanshyam proposed, "Let us play catch in



Ghanshyam walks on water

the water.” So the game began, and the boys began to chase and catch each other. But, try as they might, no one could catch Ghanshyam. He swam very fast, dived deep into the water, and reappeared far away. After playing in this way for some time, Ghanshyam dived to the bottom and sat on the bed of the lake. He did not come up for some time. His friends began to worry. They wondered, “Where could Ghanshyam be? Has he drowned or has he been swallowed by a crocodile?”

At that time, a washerman named Manchha was washing clothes on the banks of the lake. Ghanshyam’s friends ran to him for help, “We cannot find our friend Ghanshyam. He has not come out of the water. Either he has drowned, or a crocodile may have eaten him. We ask you to dive into the water and find him.”

The washerman then plunged into the water, dived deep and carried out a thorough search on all sides. However, he could find no trace of Ghanshyam. At last, completely exhausted, the washerman came up to the surface. He told the boys, “Go to the village to bring Ghanshyam’s father here and tell him everything.”

One of the boys ran to Dharmadev's house, and broke the bad news. Dharmadev was greatly upset. He took Bhaktimata, Rampratap, Vashrambhai and other villagers with him to Lake Meen without delay. They stood on the banks worried about what to do. Deep down in the water, Ghanshyam thought, "My parents are getting worryied, so I should come out of the water." With this thought, he came up to the surface. His father, mother and all the others felt relieved and happy at this sight of Ghanshyam.

Ghanshyam then started walking on the water towards the bank. The people watching from the bank had a vision, not of Ghanshyam, but of Bhagwan Ramchandra. They were astonished. Ghanshyam arrived on the bank, bowed to his father and mother, and said, "Why were you so worried? I was only sitting at the bottom of the lake to do my work."

Bhaktimata hugged Ghanshyam, and all of them walked back happily to the village.

### 33. Sailing on Stone Slabs

Once, during the month of Chaitra, Dharmadev – accompanied by Rampratap, Ichchharam, Suvasinibhabhi, Bhaktimata, Ghanshyam and other villagers – were travelling to Ayodhya. On the way was the river Saryu. The river was very wide as well as very deep. To reach Ayodhya, people had to go by boat across the river. However, only one boat was available. And it could carry only a few passengers at a time. Thus, the river bank was crowded with people waiting to cross.

Ghanshyam told the boatman, "We want a separate boat. Can you provide one?" The boatman replied, "You will have to pay more if you want to reserve the whole boat. Are you willing?" Ghanshyam replied, "We will not give you more. We will only pay the normal fare." The boatman refused. So, Ghanshyam turned to Dharmadev and the others. He said, "All of you follow me."



Sailing on the stone slabs

Ghanshyam took them to a place a short distance away, where there were some large stone slabs. He asked his mother, father, Suvasinibhabhi, Ichchharam and other villagers from Chhapaiya to sit on one of the bigger slabs, while he and Rampratapbhai sat on a smaller one. Then as he touched both the slabs with his right hand, they began to move over the water just like a real boat. People standing on the banks as well as the boatman were all bewildered at the strange sight of the stone slabs sailing on the water like proper boats. All were convinced that the little boy could be none other than Bhagwan Ramchandra himself. They bowed to Ghanshyam from the river banks. The two stone slabs soon reached the opposite side. There, they all got down and, led by Dharmadev, proceeded towards Ayodhya.

### 34. Miracle Shown to Aunts

Once, Bhaktimata's sisters, Vasantabai and Chandanbai came to stay with her in Chhapaiya. Vasantabai brought her son,



Ghanshyam stops the grinding machine

Manekdhar, along with her, and Chandanbai brought her son, Basti, too. As soon as they arrived they asked, "Where is Ghanshyam?" They were very anxious to see him. Bhaktimata replied, "He has gone to Firojpur. But he will be back soon." That same evening, Ghanshyam and Ichchharam returned home, along with Dharmadev. The two aunts gave Ghanshyam and Ichchharam *patasa*, which they had specially brought for them. After supper, everyone retired to sleep.

Early the following morning, Chandanmasi and Vasantamasi began to grind grains into flour on the stone grinder. Chandanmasi thought that as it was early morning, it would be proper to sing morning bhajans. So, while grinding, she began to sing one of Tulsidas's morning bhajans, "*Utho Lāl prabhāt bhaya hai* (Wake up my Dear it is already morning)." Ghanshyam, who was sleeping on a nearby bed, spoke up, "Aunty, I am fully awake. Why do you ask me to get up? What do you want?" On hearing this, the aunts replied, "We are not asking you to wake up. We are waking up Bhagwan."

Ghanshyam, while still lying on his bed, then stretched out his hand, and pressed it against the handle of the grinder. The grinder came to a sudden halt. The aunts tried hard to turn it, but it would not move. The aunts were perplexed. Ghanshyam then suggested to them, "Aunty, say that you are waking me up. The God whom you are asking to wake up from his sleep is the same as the one who has placed his hand on this grinder." However, the words seemed so silly that the aunts did not pay any heed to what he said. Instead, they tried harder to remove Ghanshyam's hand from the handle of the grinder, but to no avail. The hand would not budge even an inch.

Meanwhile, Bhaktimata entered the room with a lighted lamp in her hand. Both the aunts began to complain, "Sister, please ask Ghanshyam to take his hand off the grinder. We are not able to remove his hand." Bhaktimata turned to her son and said, "Ghanshyam, take off your hand." When Ghanshyam heard his mother's order, he said, "Mother, please ask the aunts whom they were trying to wake up?" When they heard Ghanshyam's complaint, the aunts relented. To pacify Ghanshyam they said, "All right, all right, it is you we were waking up. Now please allow us to carry on with the grinding."

Ghanshyam explained, "Had you said the truth in the very beginning, the grinder would not have stopped, and the work would not have been delayed." The aunts replied, "You are God. We realized just now when you showed us your divine powers. We ask for your forgiveness." So saying, they bowed to Ghanshyam.

## 35. Ghanshyam Eats All the Food

Once, in Ayodhya, the festival of Ram Navmi was not too far off. Dharmadev decided to celebrate the festival at his own house with great joy. He sent out invitations to his friends and relatives. Many friends and relatives from the surrounding



Ghanshyam shows Bhaktimata the utensils full of food

villages gladly responded to his call, and some arrived a day earlier. The following day they celebrated Ram Navmi with discourses, prayers and singing of bhajans.

On the day after the festival, Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi got up early in the morning and cooked food for the whole family as they were all breaking their fast that day. Ghanshyam, too, woke up early with his mother and finished all his morning rituals. When the food was ready, Bhaktimata placed a large plate full of all the delicacies before Thakorji to sanctify the food.

On seeing this, Ghanshyam told his mother, "I am very hungry." So, his mother took a little of each delicacy and prepared a dish for Ghanshyam. Within minutes, Ghanshyam emptied his plate. He then began eating from the plate offered to Thakorji, and soon finished everything. He then ate all the food in the other vessels, drank some water and left the kitchen.

When Bhaktimata returned to the kitchen, she found to her

horror that all the food had disappeared, and that all the plates were empty. Rushing out of the kitchen, she begged Dharmadev, “Please hurry to the market again and bring pulses, rice, flour, vegetables, ghee and gur, because Ghanshyam has eaten all the food prepared for everyone. I will have to cook everything again. Please bring all the necessary provisions quickly. Otherwise, what will we feed the guests?”

When Ghanshyam heard this, he said, “Mother, all the food is there just as it was. I have not taken anything. Come, I will show you.” Bhaktimata, however, insisted, “Suvasinibhabhi and I have just been inside and have seen everything. You have emptied all the vessels.”

Ghanshyam was no less insistent, “No, no. Just come with me and take a look.” With these words, he pulled Bhaktimata by the hand and led her to the kitchen.

A surprised Bhaktimata saw, as Ghanshyam had assured her, that all the utensils were as full as ever. Seeing such a miracle, all she could do was to embrace her son with great affection. Dharmadev was also very happy. When the guests arrived, he fed them all generously before bidding them farewell.

## 36. In Search of Gauri, the Cow

Dharmadev kept a number of cows. One of them was named Gomti, and she was very dear to Ghanshyam. Gomti had two calves, Gauri and Kapila.

Every morning, the cowherd took Dharmadev’s cows for grazing. He grazed them all day long, and brought them home in the evening. One day, however, on coming home, he found that all the cows had returned except Gauri. Deeply worried, the cowherd rushed back to the grazing field and searched everywhere. However, there was no sign of Gauri. He then returned, very downcast, and informed Dharmadev.



Ghanshyam calms the tiger

The sun had already set. Despite this, Dharmadev, along with Rampratapbhai and Ghanshyam, went out in search of Gauri. They searched all the surrounding fields, but could not find Gauri. They even went into the jungle, which was a short distance from the field, in the hope of finding her there. By now, night had descended, but soft light from a full moon brightened the scene around. The three of them searched deep into the jungle, but none could find any trace of Gauri. In a last desperate attempt, Ghanshyam and Rampratapbhai called Gauri's name aloud several times. To their delight, Gauri appeared from out of the thick bush and came running and mooing to its masters. Ghanshyam affectionately patted her on the head.

Taking Gauri with them, they began their weary journey back home through the jungle. After they had walked for some time, Dharmadev suddenly stopped. "Why have you stopped, Father?" inquired Ghanshyam. Dharmadev pointed to a spot ahead of them. Ghanshyam saw that there was a tiger resting under a tree. The tiger's eyes shone, and he was yawning. The

tiger soon smelt human flesh, and so he roared as he got up. Dharmadev, Rampratapbhai and Gauri shook with fear at this sight. Dharmadev thought that all four of them would be killed by the tiger. In the meantime, Ghanshyam ran up to the tiger, stood in front of him and looked steadily into his eyes. The tiger immediately calmed down, bent his head as if paying homage, walked respectfully around Ghanshyam, and lay down to sleep quietly.

Ghanshyam then turned to his father and said, "Do not be afraid, Father. Take Gauri and follow me. The tiger will not harm anyone. He is sleeping soundly."

Accordingly, Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai, along with Gauri, followed close behind Ghanshyam, and passed nervously by the sleeping tiger. Soon, they all emerged from the jungle and reached a neighbouring village. After staying there for the night with a relative called Oza, they all returned home with Gauri the next day. Seeing Gauri safely back and hearing the story about Ghanshyam's encounter with the tiger, Bhaktimata was overjoyed.

## 37. Walking on Water

One afternoon in Chhapaiya, Ghanshyam went to a place on the outskirts of the village with Ichchharam and some friends. There, they all bathed in Lake Meen and began to play *ambli-pipli* under a banyan tree. The game went on until evening when, suddenly, it began to rain. At first they thought that the rain would soon stop, and then they could return home.

However, it rained heavily and continuously. Darkness spread all around. Thunder and lightning tore through the sky. Ichchharam and the other younger children began to cry. The lake was swelling rapidly. Within a short time, the whole of the surrounding area was inundated with water. The older boys,



Ghanshyam and his friends walk on water during the heavy rain

Veni, Madhav and Prag, were also worried as to how they would reach home. Frightened, Ichchharam asked Ghanshyam, "What will happen now? How can we go home with this flood water around us? I will drown if I try to walk through the water."

Ghanshyam told Ichchharam and the others not to worry, "Don't be afraid. Come on let us get down from the tree. I will walk in front. Ichchharam, you walk behind me holding on to my dhoti. The others follow similarly, one behind the other, holding on to one another's dhotis from behind. We will all walk on the water. The rain will not even fall on us."

Then, Ghanshyam got down from the tree. He kept Ichchharam behind him. After them were Veni, Madhav, Prag and the others. Thus, holding on to one another's dhotis, they all walked behind Ghanshyam. When they came to the water's edge, they were lifted above the ground by some unseen power. And so they walked across the water without even getting their feet wet. Rain fell on all sides, but it did not touch them.

In this way, they all crossed the river and reached the outskirts of the village. Dharmadev, Bhaktimata and the parents of the

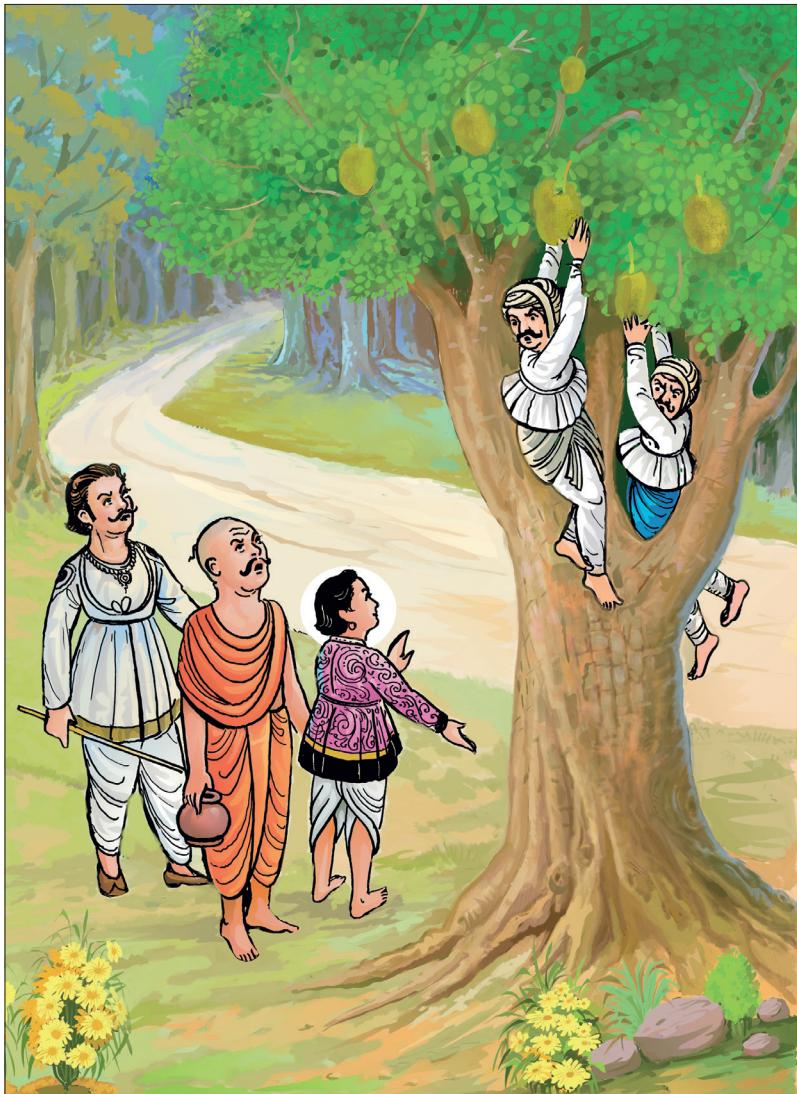
other boys were all out searching for them. Suddenly, they were astonished to see the boys walking on the water. There was a brilliant light emanating from Ghanshyam's body. They all bowed to Ghanshyam, believing him to be God himself. They were all pleased with the safe return of their sons. After bowing to Ghanshyam, they returned home happily with their sons.

## 38. Thieves in a Fix

There was a farm a short distance from Ghanshyam's house. It belonged to Dharmadev, and was looked after by Rampratapbhai. Once, Ghanshyam and Rampratapbhai decided to take care of the jackfruits growing on a jackfruit tree. They planned to pluck the jackfruits from the tree once they ripened and bring them home for their parents to enjoy.

One night, two thieves came, made a hole in the farm wall, and entered. Silently and stealthily they walked up to the jackfruit tree and climbed it. They thought, "The fruits are all ripe. Let us pick them. We shall carry them away in bags, and earn a lot of money by selling them in the market." However, as soon as they touched the first jackfruit in order to pluck it, both their hands became stuck to the fruit. Despite trying, they could not free their hands. While they were still struggling, the day dawned. Soon, it was morning.

Dharmadev, carrying a water pot in hand, came to the farm to brush his teeth. The two thieves saw him, and quickly repented for their wrongdoing. They offered prayers, and decided in their minds, "Never again will we steal. Never again will we take away anything without first asking for the owner's permission. Oh God! Please set us free. If Rampratapbhai comes, he will break our bones. Please, Oh Lord, we pray to you again. Set us free. Save us." Soon they saw, in the distance, Rampratapbhai and Ghanshyam coming towards them. They were panic-stricken.



The two thieves beg for forgiveness

When Rampratapbhai saw the thieves on the tree, he ran to beat them with his stick, but Ghanshyam stopped him. He went near the jackfruit tree along with his father. With tears in their eyes, the thieves begged for forgiveness, "Oh Dharmadev! We have committed a crime. We came to your farm to steal the

jackfruits, but our hands got stuck to the fruits. So we cannot get down from the tree. Please set us free, and forgive us of our mistake. We promise to never again steal anything again.”

Listening to their tearful pleas, Ghanshyam cast a divine glance. At once, their hands were freed. Both thieves climbed down, bowed to Dharmadev, Rampratapbhai and Ghanshyam, and once again pleaded to be forgiven. Ghanshyam told them. “Do not steal any more. Stealing is a grave sin.” With these words, he picked two ripe jackfruits and gave one to each of them. He then blessed them before they left.

## 39. Darshan in Two Forms

During the Diwali festival period, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata began preparations for the Annakut festival from the day of Dhanteras. Sweets such as laddus, *jalebi*, *mesur*, *mohanthal*, *sata*, *barfi* and *penda* were prepared. A variety of savoury and fried items such as *sev*, *chevdo*, *fafda*, *mathia* and *cholasali* were also prepared. On the day of Diwali, Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi, along with other women from the village, who had come to Dharmadev’s house, began cooking from early in the morning.

Bhaktimata prepared *dudhpak*, *shrikhand*, *basundi*, *shiro*, *biranj* and other such delicacies, while Suvasinibhabhi cooked savouries such as *dhokla*, *patra*, *bhajia* and *kachori*. Some of the other ladies prepared a variety of vegetable dishes, while others cooked a variety of pulses. Some made *puris*, *chapattis*, *pakodi*, *khaja*, etc., while some others boiled rice, *dal*, *kadhi*, *khichdi*. Rampratapbhai, the eldest brother, went to get fruits such as, chikoo, pomegranates, jackfruits, grapes, sugarcane, bananas, oranges and cashew nuts from the family farm.

In Thakorji’s room, Ghanshyam helped his father with the decorations. They adorned Thakorji with beautiful clothes.



Ghanshyam gives darshan in two forms

Garlands of leaves were hung up everywhere. *Divas* were lighted. At 11 a.m., plates filled with a variety of foods were arranged before Thakorji. By noon, all the sweets, savoury foodstuffs, pulses, vegetables and fruits had been arranged. Betel leaves were also placed before the deity. Everyone then sat down before Thakorji to sing *thals*. Afterwards, Dharmadev lit the *arti*, and

started waving it before Thakorji, accompanied by the ringing of bells and beating of drums. All the villagers had gathered at Dharmadev's house for the *arti* and darshan of the *annakut* offering.

During the *arti* ritual, a miracle unexpectedly happened. Everyone present sometimes looked in the direction of Dharmadev and sometimes in the direction of Thakorji. They saw two forms of Ghanshyam, one by the side of Thakorji, and the other by the side of Dharmadev, who was waving the *arti*. They saw these twin forms of Ghanshyam until the *arti* was complete. They were astonished. Everyone was convinced that Thakorji and Ghanshyam were one and the same. They all prostrated before both.

Seeing this miracle, Dharmadev understood that Ghanshyam was God manifest. He immediately sent for a large plate. In it, he put all the varieties of food that had been prepared and served it to Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam called his younger brother, Ichchharam, and both the brothers started eating in front of Thakorji. People remained to have darshan of the *annakut* until 2 p.m. Ghanshyam personally served the sanctified food from the *annakut* offering to each of the villagers.

People returned home, full of joy at having received *prasad* from the hands of God himself!

## 40. The Priest's Sight Is Restored

Behind Dharmadev's house in Ayodhya was a mandir dedicated to Mahadev. Ghanshyam would go there for Mahadev's darshan. Once, when engaged in darshan, he heard a man by the name of Devibaksh, praying to Shankar Bhagwan. He was asking for something inappropriate. Hearing this, Ghanshyam became upset. He felt like immediately leaving home to practise austerities. He thought, "There must be many such ignorant



Ghanshyam restores the sight of the blind priest, Vrajvihari

people in this world. I want to teach them the spiritual truths and liberate them.” With this thought he returned home, in a gloomy frame of mind.

When Dharmadev saw that his son was depressed, he asked him. “Ghanshyam! Why do you look so depressed today?” Ghanshyam dismissed the question by saying, “No, I am not at all depressed.”

The following day, Ghanshyam went for darshan at the Vidyakund Mandir. A blind Brahmin named Vrajvihari was the pujari of that mandir. He had learnt the whole of the Ramayan and Mahabharat by heart. So, sitting there in the mandir, he was narrating stories from the Ramayan. Many devotees were listening to the stories with rapt attention. During the narration, Ghanshyam heard the priest saying, “Ramchandra left home to stay in exile in the forest for a period of 14 years.” Immediately Ghanshyam again thought of leaving home and going to the forests to perform austerities. He requested Vra-

jvihari, the blind Brahmin, to stop for a moment, because he wanted to ask a question about *vairagya*. The Brahmin replied, “Asking questions during the discourse causes disturbance. Please don’t ask questions during the discourse. Come to my house, and I will answer all of your questions.” Ghanshyam was disappointed with the reply. He quietly went and sat on the verandah outside.

Ghanshyam felt sorry for Vrajvihari. He placed his hand on the Brahmin’s head and gazed into his eyes. To his joy, Vrajvihari’s sight was restored. The Brahmin and all the devotees present soon had the darshan of Bhagwan Ramchandra in Ghanshyam. Vrajvihari fell at Ghanshyam’s feet. After receiving his blessings, he went home with joy and gratitude in his heart.

## 41. Ghanshyam’s Daily Routine

Ghanshyam would wake up daily at 4 a.m. After getting up, he would meditate on God for a few minutes. Thereafter, he would go with his friends to the River Saryu. He would clean his teeth. After bathing, he would put on clean clothes to perform puja and meditation.

Only after puja would he drink his glass of milk before sitting down for his studies with Dharmadev. The latter would teach him logic, grammar, dharma shastras, Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, Sankhya, Yoga, Vedanta and other subjects. Ghanshyam would listen to his father’s teachings attentively. When Dharmadev completed his part of the teaching, Ghanshyam would study by himself.

At 9 a.m., he would visit all the mandirs in Ayodhya and have darshan of the deities. Wherever the Ramayan was being narrated he would sit and listen to it with rapt attention. At



Dharmadev teaches the shastras to Ghanshyam

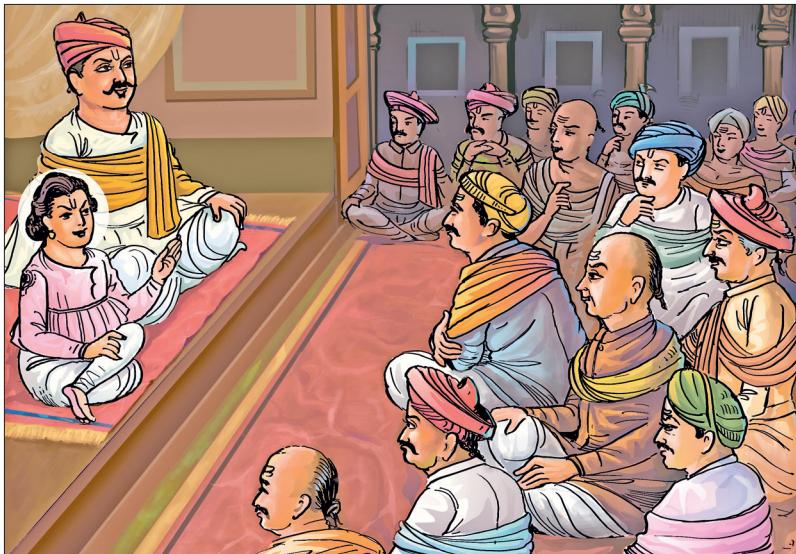
noon, he would return home, wash his hands and feet, and take lunch with Dharmadev. Thereafter, he would resume his studies.

At 3 p.m., he would again go to bathe in the river. Then, accompanied by his friends, he would without fail, go to the Hanuman Gadhi Mandir for darshan during the evening *arti*. He would come back home only after the evening *arti* was over.

Returning home, he would again wash his hands and feet and then have before taking dinner with Dharmadev. Thereafter, he would go and sit by the side of his father who would tell him stories from the Ramayan, Mahabharat, Purans and other shastras. He would listen with great attention and interest. At the end of the day, he would retire to bed. Such was his daily routine.

## 42. Assembly of Scholars in Kashi

Ghanshyam had entered his 11th year. Around this time, a lunar eclipse was to occur. Dharmadev decided to go to Kashi



Ghanshyam discourses during the debate in Kashi

with some relatives and bathe in the holy River Ganga after the eclipse.

Dharmadev was a renowned scholar. When the scholars in Kashi found out that Dharmadev had arrived in Kashi, they came to Gomath on the banks of the River Ganga to meet him. Ghanshyam was with Dharmadev. When they saw Ghanshyam, they wondered if Bruhaspati himself had come in the form of a son to Dharmadev!

The scholars of Kashi had organized a debate on the shastras at the Gomath. Dharmadev was to be the chairman, and the debate would be attended by scholars of all the different schools of philosophy.

The Advait scholars started the discussion saying, “Everything is Brahma. Brahma is the only reality. All else is illusion.”

The Dvaita scholars replied, “No, Brahma, *jiva*, and this world are all real.”

The debate continued for a long time. The scholars knew there would be no end to it. So they decided to ask Ghanshyam.

They wondered which philosophy a miraculous child like him supported. His word would be regarded as final.

Thus, at everyone's request and with Dharmadev's permission, Ghanshyam entered the discussion. He beautifully and very clearly explained the deep and difficult meanings of verses from the Vedas. With the backing of the shastras he solidly propagated a unique philosophy. Everyone was spellbound by his knowledge and oratory.

As Ghanshyam continued to speak, rays of divine light emanated from his body. Everyone seated there experienced samadhi. Each scholar saw their chosen deity in Ghanshyam's form. Some saw Shankaracharya, others saw Shiv or Ramchandrajji, while others saw Shri Krishna.

In this state of samadhi everyone performed Ghanshyam's *pujan* with sandalwood paste and kumkum. Dharmadev was greatly surprised on seeing all this. Finally, when Ghanshyam awoke everyone from samadhi, they all prostrated before him and prayed for his divine blessings.

Respect for Dharmadev increased greatly in Kashi. Everybody congratulated him for having such a miraculous son and hailed the glory of Ghanshyam. Dharmadev was also full of joy.

## 43. Bhaktimata and Dharmadev Pass Away

Ghanshyam was now 11 years old. Bhaktimata and Dharmadev were aging. One day, Bhaktimata went down with fever. Day by day, her health became worse. Because of the fever and weakness, she became bedridden. One evening, she called her three sons and said to them, "My illness is getting worse day by day. My whole body is aching. I will not live much longer. Rampratap and Suvasini, please take care of Ghanshyam and Ichchharam. Ghanshyam and Ichchharam,

always obey your elder brother and *bbabhi*. Please all live together in peace and harmony.”

Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai wrote to all their relatives, asking them to come to Chhapaiya, since Bhaktimata’s end was drawing near. Ghanshyam also gave discourses to his mother and also appeared to her in the divine form of Narayan with four arms. Bhaktimata closed her eyes and meditated on Ghanshyam. After a while, she quietly passed away to the divine abode of Akshardham.

The three brothers and their father, along with their relatives and villagers, performed the funeral rites and resolved that they would be as religious and devout as Bhaktimata was.

Six months later, Dharmadev also fell ill. Because of old age he felt very weak and tired. He was so feeble that he could not even get up from bed. He distributed alms to the poor and gifts to the Brahmins. He asked his sons to read him stories from the Bhagvat.

One day, when the reading was over, Dharmadev called his three sons near. He said to Rampratapbhai, “Listen Rampratap. Ghanshyam is God manifest. He is not attached in any way to this mundane existence. Please always treat him with love and respect. Do not speak to him harshly. Take good care of Ichchharam also.” Turning to his younger sons, he instructed, “Ghanshyam and Ichchharam, remember Rampratapbhai is your elder brother, and obey him. Please always follow these words of mine.”

After Dharmadev had spoken, a brilliant light emanated from the body of Ghanshyam. In that light, Dharmadev saw the 24 avatars of God – Ram, Krishna, Brahmā, Vishnu, Mahesh and others. Dharmadev’s mind became absorbed in Ghanshyam. Lying on his bed, Dharmadev offered prayers to Ghanshyam. A few minutes later he breathed his last.

All were grief-stricken. They bathed Dharmadev’s body with the holy water of the River Ganga, and performed the

funeral rites. Alms were distributed to the poor and to the Brahmins. All prayed to God that they become as pure and virtuous as Dharmadev.

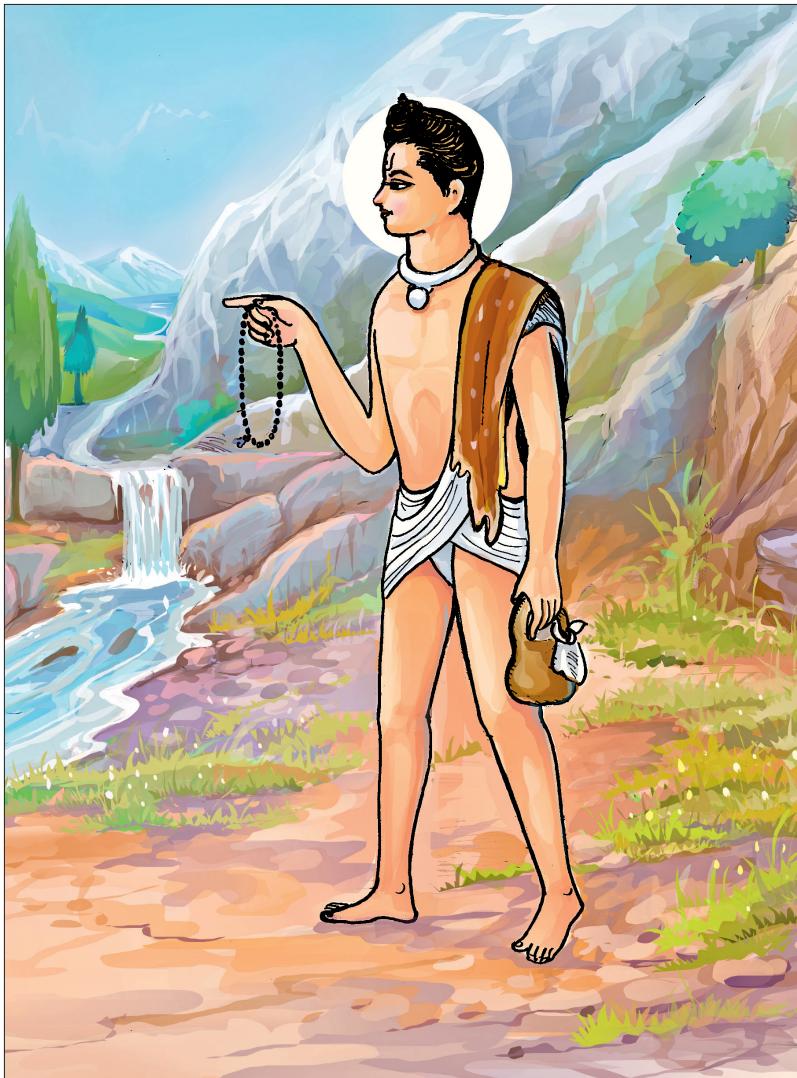
## 44. Ghanshyam Renounces Home

Soon after the passing away of Bhaktimata and Dharmadev, Ghanshyam thought of renouncing home, and practising austterities in the forests. He was waiting for a suitable opportunity.

Meanwhile, one morning, he became very disinterested in the mundane nature of the world. After bathing in the morning, he visited all the mandirs in Ayodhya for darshan. When returning home, he passed a garden where some wrestlers were practising their skills. On seeing Ghanshyam, the wrestlers surrounded him from all sides, and prevented him from proceeding further.

Ghanshyam, using his divine powers, made his body as big and as strong as the wrestlers, and entered into a combat with them. There were 27 of them. However, he lifted them all, one by one, spun them round and round before finally throwing them to the ground. All their bones ached. No one could get up. Realizing their pitiable condition, all 27 wrestlers began to cry like small children.

The parents and relatives of the wrestlers went to complain to Rampratapbhai, "Your Ghanshyam has beaten our sons despite no fault of theirs." When Rampratapbhai heard this, he thought, "Ghanshyam should be told off. If people keep complaining about him daily, our reputation in the town will suffer. It is not proper that Ghanshyam misbehaves now that Mother and Father have passed away." With this thought in mind, Rampratapbhai rebuked Ghanshyam severely. Ghanshyam heard his brother patiently. Finally, he remarked, "Respected brother. Rest assured, there will be no complaint against me from today."



Ghanshyam renounces home

It was at that moment that Ghanshyam finalized his decision to renounce home. After their evening meal, both Rampratapbhai and Suvasinibhabhi went to sleep, with no inkling of what was to happen the following morning.

Early next morning, Ghanshyam awoke at 3.30 p.m. Quietly,

while everyone else was fast asleep, he gathered a few belongings and walked out of his house in Ayodhya. Whoever saw him thought he must be going to bathe since he was walking towards the River Saryu.

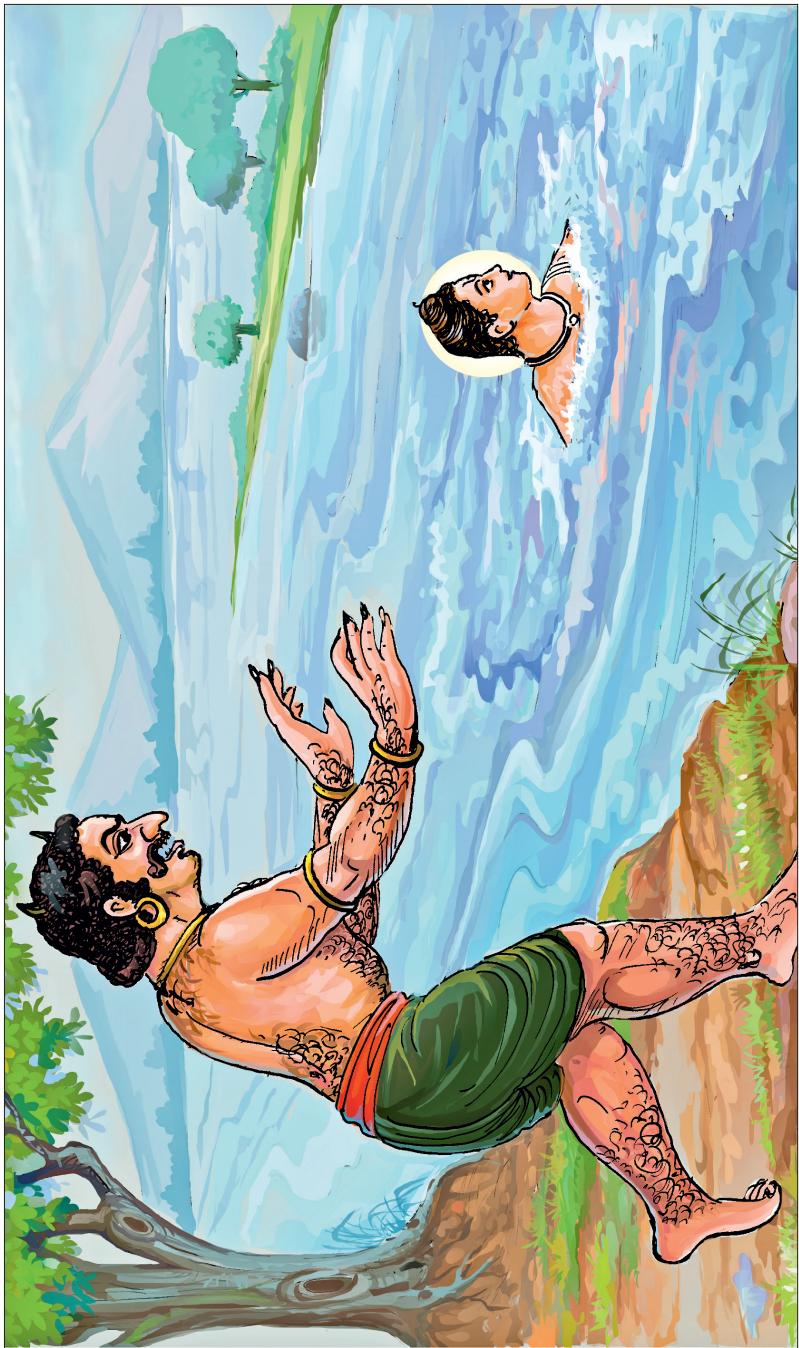
At the time, Ghanshyam had a waistband of *moonj* grass. On his body was only one piece of cloth, a loin-cloth. On his back he had a *mrigacharma*, the skin of a deer. He held a *mala* in one hand and a stick of the *palash* tree in the other. At one end of the stick he had tied a small bundle of papers containing the essence of the shastras. He also carried a water-pot, alms bowl and a filter-cloth with him. A double string of *tulsi* beads hung around his neck and the sacred thread on his left shoulders. He also took with him a Shaligram representing Vishnu, and a *batwo* of Balmukund, representing Shri Krishna. There was a *tilak* on his forehead and his hair was matted. He was walking barefoot. Clad in the manner of an ascetic, Ghanshyam left to perform austerities in the Himalayas, a long way beyond the River Saryu.

## 45. On the Banks of the River Saryu

Thus clad as a *varni*, Ghanshyam, after leaving home, walked in the direction of River Saryu. He looked back frequently over his shoulders fearing, "What if my elder brother comes and takes me home! But now, I am determined not to return home, and want to perform austerities and help people attain moksha." He walked briskly on, and soon reached the bank of the Saryu.

It was the morning of 29 June 1792 CE (Ashadh *sud* 10, Samvat 1849). There was a faint drizzle. The Saryu was, however, in flood, and was overflowing from both its banks, Ghanshyam stood on the banks, with a resolve to dive into the river and cross it.

Meanwhile, Kaliya, a leader of the *asurs*, sent the evil demon,



The evil Kaushik pushes Ghanshyam into the flooded river Saryu

Kaushik, with instructions to kill Ghanshyam. Kaushik came from behind stealthily, like a cat, and, with one blow, hurled little Ghanshyam into the flood waters of the Saryu. Ghanshyam was carried away by the floods. Within a short time, he disappeared from sight.

Pleased with himself, Kaushik went to convey the good news to his chief, Kaliya.

## 46. Ocean of Tears

Meanwhile, at home, when Rampratapbhai and Suvasinibhabhi woke up they found that Ghanshyam was not in bed. They thought, "Perhaps he has risen a little earlier than usual, and has gone to bathe early. He will soon be back." Rampratapbhai went away to work on his farm as usual. Bhabhi prepared breakfast, and then started cooking the midday meal. In the busy hours of the morning, they forgot about Ghanshyam for a while.

But soon Bhabhi began to worry, "It is almost noon. Why has Ghanshyam still not returned?" For some time, she waited for Ghanshyam to return so that they could take their midday meal together. As there was no sign of Ghanshyam, her anxiety increased. She called Ghanshyam's friends and asked them, "Where is Ghanshyam? Have you seen him? Why has he not come back still? Do you know where he has gone?"

However, his friends replied, "We do not know. He did not come with us. When we went to the river to bathe, he was not there. He did not come with us to bathe." Bhabhi became more anxious than ever. She went to the homes of all the relatives in her search for Ghanshyam. She enquired at the homes of Lakshmibai, Chandanmasi and others, but no one had any idea where Ghanshyam was. It was evening by then. Suvasinibhabhi sent a man to the farm to call Rampratapbhai home. When he



Rampratapbhai and Suvasinibhabhi lament the departure of Ghanshyam

came, she told him that Ghanshyam had still not returned, and no one knew where he had gone.

Rampratapbhai, too, became deeply worried. He went and searched in all the mandirs where Ghanshyam used to go for darshan. However, Ghanshyam was nowhere to be found. Rampratapbhai then searched on the banks of the River Saryu, in the orchard of rose-apple trees, on the outskirts of the village, in the fields of Veni, Madhav and Prag; in fact, he searched all those places which Ghanshyam was in the habit of visiting, but nowhere could he find him.

Ghanshyam's younger brother, Ichchharam, would ask, "Bhabhi, where has Ghanshyam gone? I do not like it in the house without him. Please bring him home." Bhabhi, however, had no answer. She was grief-stricken beyond words, and cried her heart out. Even Ghanshyam's friends were in no mood to play without him. Everyone asked, "Where is Ghanshyam? Where is Ghanshyam?" But no one could answer. Every now and then, his friends came enquiring, "Have you found Ghanshyam? We haven't found him either. We went around all the places, and looked for him in the streets, in the village square, in the fields, everywhere, but he is not to be found anywhere. Where

could he have gone? What could have happened to him? Why has he not come back?"

For Rampratapbhai, the waiting was unbearable. He was speechless with sorrow. His eyes were wet with tears. The relatives who had been looking everywhere also gave up the search as hopeless. It was now almost dark. Night was approaching. Still there were a few who, with lamps in their hands, continued the search for Ghanshyam, however bleak the chances of finding him.

At home, there was no end to Bhabhi's wailing. Ichchharamji, too, was also crying ceaselessly. Ghanshyam's friends were also in agony. Ghanshyam was the darling of them all. There was lamentation at every home in Ayodhya. Bhabhi was haunted by imaginary fears about Ghanshyam's safety, "What if he has been torn to pieces and devoured by a tiger or a wolf in the jungle? Or maybe he has been bitten by a poisonous snake? Or swallowed by a crocodile in the river?" Such fearful thoughts would cross her worried mind, and she cried all the more.

Finally, the thought arose, "Could he have left home for good, donned a sadhu's garb, and gone out to the forests to practise austerities. Maybe because he had been rebuked by his elder brother yesterday? But his clothes and his sandals are still here. How would he walk barefoot? How would he keep well in the rain? How would he bear the cold or the heat, barebodied as he must be? Who would feed him in the jungle? How would Ghanshyam, who was used to eating curds, milk and sweets every day, now like eating the wild fruits and leaves of the jungle? Surely the wild animals will devour him." Such thoughts would make her cry even more.

After going everywhere and searching all the places over and over again, Rampratapbhai, exhausted and disheartened, returned home late at midnight. Ghanshyam could not be found. Rampratapbhai's endurance was at breaking point. The

agony was terrible. Both he and his wife cried out to God for help, “Oh God! Please find our Ghanshyam for us. Our hearts are broken. It is unbearable. Oh Lord! Take us away, if you like; but give us back our Ghanshyam, who is dearer to us than our own lives. Oh God! Please find Ghanshyam for us. People will accuse us, saying, that brother and *bhabhi* drove him out! Some will say that Ghanshyam has gone away because his brother and *bhabhi* harassed him beyond endurance. We promise to do as he wishes.”

In this way the couple both continued to lament. Night passed and morning came. Rampratapbhai sent men with horses in all directions in a last desperate search for Ghanshyam. Rampratapbhai stopped going to his farm to work. No one took any food. No one liked to eat. Ichchharam kept on crying the whole day, remembering his brother all the time. In this way, days passed, five days, then ten. But no news of Ghanshyam came. Everyone was utterly and hopelessly grief-stricken. As people said later, oceans of tears were shed by Ichchharam and Suvasinibhabhi, who very often suddenly woke up from their sleep, bewildered and distraught, crying out, “Ghanshyam! Ghanshyam!”

The whole city of Ayodhya was plunged into grief, unspeakable grief, and felt abandoned and desolate.

# Glossary

**Advait** one of the schools of Vedanta philosophy, teaching non-dualism

**Akshardham** divine abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan

**ambli-pipli** a popular traditional Indian outdoor game

**angarkhu** a traditional upper garment for men, often tied at the chest, similar to a waistcoat

**ankush** a goad used to guide an elephant; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God.

**annakut** literally ‘a mountain of food’; a devotional offering of a large variety of food items to God

**apsara** Celestial maiden who resides in the heavens

**ardhachandra** a half-moon; one of the seven divine signs believed to be on the sole of the left foot of God

**arti** Hindu ritual of waving lighted wicks before the *murti* of God as an act of worship

**asan** a seat or a mat used for sitting during worship or meditation

**ashtakon** an octagon; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God

**Ashwamedh Yagna** a grand horse sacrifice, performed by ancient kings to prove their imperial sovereignty

**asopalav** a type of tree whose leaves are considered auspicious and used for decoration

**asur** a demon or a being with evil tendencies

**atma** soul or *jiva*, distinct from the physical, subtle, and causal bodies

**avatar** an incarnation of God on earth

**babul** the gum arabic tree, the twigs of which are used as a toothbrush (*datan*)

**barfi** a popular Indian sweet, typically made from condensed milk and sugar, often in a solid, fudge-like form

**basundi** a sweet, rich, thickened milk dessert, often garnished with nuts

**batuk** a young Brahmin boy, especially one who has just received the sacred thread (*janoi*)

**batwo** a small pouch or bag, often for carrying personal items

**bawa** an ascetic or sadhu

**bhabhi** sister-in-law; a respectful term for one's elder brother's wife

**bhajan** a devotional song or hymn

**bhajia** a fried savoury snack, typically made by batter-coating vegetables like potatoes or onions

**biranj** a traditional sweet dish made from cooked rice, milk, ghee, and sugar or jaggery, flavoured with cardamom and garnished with nuts

**Brahmin** a member of the priestly or scholarly class in Hindu society

**butta** an embroidered floral or figured design on cloth

**chandan** sandalwood paste

**chevdo** a salty, savoury snack mix

**chibhdo** a type of small melon, similar to a cucumber

**cholafali** a popular crispy, savoury snack from Gujarat

**chusni** a pacifier or an object for a child to suck on

**dakshina** a gift or fee given to a priest or guru at the end of a religious ceremony

**dal** a spicy soup of dissolved pulses, a staple dish in Indian cuisine

**darbar** the royal court or the formal assembly hall of a king or chieftain

**darshan** the auspicious act of seeing the sacred *murti* of God or a holy person

**datan** a twig from a tree (often *babul* or neem) used for brushing teeth

**deva** a celestial being or god

**devchakli** a type of songbird

**dhanush** a bow; one of the seven divine signs believed to be on the sole of the left foot of God

**Dhanteras** the first day of the five-day Diwali festival

**dharma** righteousness, duty, and the moral codes prescribed in the shastras

**dhokla** a savoury steamed cake made from a fermented batter of rice and split chickpeas

**Diwali** the Hindu festival of lights, celebrated over five days

**divo** a small, lighted wick, usually in an earthen or metal lamp filled with ghee

**dudhpak** a sweet, rich delicacy made from thickened milk, rice, and sugar

**Dvaita** one of the schools of Vedanta philosophy, teaching dualism

**ekadashi** the eleventh day of each half of the lunar month, observed as a day of fasting

**fafda** a popular crispy, savoury snack made from gram flour

**gopis** the cowherd women of Vraj, renowned for their pure devotion to Shri Krishna

**gopad** a cow's hoofprint; one of the seven divine signs believed to be on the sole of the left foot of God

**gulal** fragrant coloured powder, typically red, used on joyous occasions

**gur** jaggery; a coarse, unrefined sugar made from sugarcane juice

**haveli** a traditional mansion or large townhouse

**jalebi** a popular sweet made by deep-frying a wheat-flour batter in circular shapes, which are then soaked in sugar syrup.

**jambu** the java plum fruit; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God

**janoi** the sacred thread worn by Brahmin and other Hindu men after their investiture ceremony

**jav** barley; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God

**jiva** soul or individual self

**kachori** a fried, rounded pastry filled with a savoury stuffing of lentils or other ingredients

**kadhi** a savoury curry made from a base of yoghurt or buttermilk and gram flour

**Kalbhairav** a fierce manifestation of Bhagwan Shiv, often associated with destruction

**kalash** a sacred metal pot; one of the seven divine signs believed to be on the sole of the left foot of God

**kanthi** a double-stranded necklace, usually made of tulsi

**Kathi** a member of the warrior and land-owning community of Saurashtra

**kediyu** a traditional upper garment for men; a type of frock that is pleated at the chest

**kesar** saffron

**ketu** a banner or flag; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God

**khaja** a layered, flaky pastry that is deep-fried and soaked in sugar syrup

**Khampa** broken branch

**khes** a loose cloth or shawl worn over the shoulders

**khichadi** a dish made from rice and lentils cooked together

**kothari** a monk or devotee in charge of the storeroom and provisions of a mandir

**kritya** a female demoness created through tantric rituals

**kumkum** red vermillion powder used for auspicious marks

**laddu** a round, sweet ball made from flour, sugar, and ghee  
**Lakshmiji** the Hindu goddess of fortune, prosperity, and beauty

**mahant** head of a mandir or monastery

**makhan** butter, especially fresh, white, unsalted butter

**mala** a rosary; a string of beads used for counting mantras or chants

**mandap** a pillared, canopied hall or marquee, often temporary, used for Hindu weddings and other rituals

**mandir** a Hindu place of worship; a temple

**mantra** a sacred word, sound, or verse recited to aid concentration in meditation or worship

**mathia** a thin, crispy, savoury snack, popular during Diwali

**maya** the universal illusion; God's power that deludes the *jiva*

**meen** a fish; one of the seven divine signs believed to be on the sole of the left foot of God

**mena** the myna bird, known for its ability to mimic speech

**mesur** a sweet, rich Indian delicacy, usually made of gram flour, ghee and sugar

**mohanthal** a traditional sweet made from roasted gram flour, ghee, and sugar

**moksha** ultimate liberation from the cycle of births and deaths

**moonj grass** a type of coarse grass used to make waistbands for ascetics

**mrigacharma** the skin of a deer, used by ascetics as a seat or a garment.

**murti** the sacred image of God that is revered and worshipped

**nawab** a title for a Muslim ruler or nobleman

**niyam** a moral or spiritual rule or discipline

**padma** a lotus; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God

**pagh** a traditional Indian headgear; a turban

**pakodi** a fried snack; fritter

**palanquin** a covered conveyance consisting of a chair or cot carried on two horizontal poles by four or six bearers

**palash** a species of tree (*Butea monosperma*), also known as the 'flame of the forest'

**panchajiri** a mixture of five ingredients (powdered ginger, coriander seeds, cumin, coconut, sugar or gur, and ghee), offered as *prasad*

**patar** See *patra*

**patasa** a round, puffed sweet made of sugar

**patra** a savoury snack made by spreading a paste on colocasia leaves, which are then rolled, steamed, and fried

**penda** a sweet delicacy made from thickened milk

**pipal** the sacred fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*)

**pitambar** a yellow, silken cloth garment

**pradakshina** the act of circumambulating a sacred person or object in a clockwise direction as a mark of reverence

**prasad** sanctified food that has been offered to God

**puja** the act of worship

**pujan** a ritual of worship with materials such as kumkum, sandalwood paste, flowers, etc.

**puri** a small, round, fried, unleavened bread

**rakshas** demon

**ras** a traditional folk dance of Gujarat, performed in a circle.

**ras-rotli** a meal consisting of mango juice (*ras*) and chapattis (*rotli*)

**rotli** a thin, unleavened bread made from millet flour; chapatti

**sadhu** an ascetic or monk who has renounced worldly life

**samadhi** a state of deep meditation in which one experiences divine trance and unity with God

**samskar** impressions from actions and desires of past births that shape one's nature

**sankalp** a solemn vow or resolution made with spiritual intent

**Sankhya** one of the six systems of Indian philosophy

**sannyasi** a person who has renounced all worldly duties and is living as an ascetic

**sari** a traditional garment worn by women in the Indian subcontinent

**Satsang** holy fellowship

**satsang** the practice of spiritually associating with the Satpurush, fellow *satsangis*, one's own *atma*, and sacred shastras

**satsangi** a member of the Satsang fellowship; a devotee

**sev** a fried savoury snack made from gram flour

**seva** selfless service offered to God or his devotee

**shahanai/shehnai** a traditional Indian woodwind instrument

**shak** a cooked vegetable dish; curry

**shakti** power, energy; often referring to the divine feminine power

**shastra** holy scripture

**shikharbaddha** a mandir built with pinnacles according to scriptural traditions

**shiro** a sweet dish, usually made of wheat flour or semolina, ghee, milk, and sugar

**shrikhand** a sweet dish made of strained yoghurt, often flavoured with saffron and cardamom

**siddhi** a divine, celestial maiden; a personified supernatural power

**sindoor** a traditional red or orange-red powder, applied by married women on their foreheads

**surval** a pair of loose-fitting trousers

**swastik** an ancient auspicious symbol, representing well-being and good fortune; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God

**talavdi** a small pond or lake

**Thakorji** a respectful name for God used when referring to his sacred *murti*

**thal** a plate of food devotionally offered to God

**tilak** an auspicious U-shaped mark made on the forehead with sandalwood paste

**tilak-chandlo** the complete ritual mark consisting of a U-shaped *tilak* and a round *chandlo*

**trikon** a triangle; one of the seven divine signs believed to be on the sole of the left foot of God

**tulsi** the holy basil plant, revered in Hinduism

**upasana** the philosophical understanding of God's supreme nature and the correct mode of worshipping him

**urdhva rekha** an upward-pointing line; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God

**vairagya** Detachment from worldly pleasures and pursuits

**vajra** a thunderbolt; one of the nine divine signs believed to be on the sole of the right foot of God

**varni** an honorific title for a *brahmachari* (celibate)

**vartman** vows to be observed by devotees

**vyom** the sky or ether; one of the seven divine signs believed to be on the sole of the left foot of God

**yagna** a ritual performed to please the deities, traditionally involving grain offerings into a sacred fire

**yoga** a system of physical, mental, and spiritual disciplines which originated in ancient India